

# Notes from SURF CITY

by Jan & Dean Mullaney

## Open up that Golden Gate!

Moving to California has its definite advantages. Sure the weather's nice . . . but it's still summer and the temperature back in New York this time of year is even more inviting. Having such a choice pick of apples and grapes is enjoyable, but New York State grapes and apples are equally juicy and delicious. Then what can California offer that New York doesn't? Would you believe a free bottle of wine with every photocopy machine purchase?!

We just had our new Minolta photocopier delivered along with its attendant reams of paper, bottles of toner and developer, and instruction manuals. But it seems that our salesman, a former New Yorker himself named Rick Krulish, likes to do things in style. So tonight, we drink a tasty bottle of California white wine with our fettuccini! Thanks, Rick — we promise not to pour the wine where the toner is supposed to go!

## "S" is for the many Sensations he has Scripted!

Have you ever noticed how many characters whose names begin with the letter "s" have been created by that super-scribe himself, Jerry Siegel? His exciting series, *The Starling*, is now appearing in the pages of *Destroyer Duck*, and is but the latest in Jerry's long line of winning creations. Beginning with Superman (which he co-created with Joe Shuster), Jerry has also given us Spectre, Spy, Slam Bradley, Star Spangled Kid, and Superboy! In fact, he even at one time used the pseudonym "Jerry Ess"!



Jerry Siegel's *The Starling* drawn by Val Mayerik.

We had the pleasure of meeting Jerry and his wife Joanna for the first time recently and they both want

to express their thanks to the many, many readers who have sent such favorable letters about *The Starling*. We are all — Jerry, Joanna, Val Mayerik and us Surf City Kids — thrilled and overwhelmed by your response to this series. Although *The Starling* has had but two brief appearances so far, it looks like this "S" is a hit too!

And when you pick up *Destroyer Duck* no. 4 to read the next chapter of *The Starling*, you may also note something else in the lead feature. Y'know, for years people have been saying that Steve Gerber is crazy. I mean, here's a guy who once made Doctor Strange dress up as Bozo! Well, once you read the story in DD no. 4, you'll see that Steve really isn't crazy. He's . . . INSANE! The team of Gerber, Kirby and Alcala have made *Destroyer Duck* the leading serious "humor" book around.

## Open up that Golden Gate — Take Two

Although by the time you read this October 30th will have passed, let it hereby be known that it shall be forever called "ECLIPSE DAY" (at least on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley!). Y'see, that's the day we're being honored by Comics and Comix, the biggest comics shop in the entire San Francisco Bay area. And thanks to Tom, Diana and the entire crew at Comics and Comix for the fine, fine invite. While as of this writing the day has not yet come, we know we're going to have a blast, and have plenty of free gifts in store for everyone who comes by to say hello.

Gee, first a free bottle of wine, and now they name a day after us! What could be next? The governorship? Hmm, and then maybe even the Presidency! And why stop there? How about Masters of the Galaxy!? Supreme Beings of the Omniverse! And we can get Jack Kirby to design all of our costumes! And . . . uh, well, come to think of it, we're pretty happy with our lot as it is. After all, not every comics company has a day named after itself!

## We're Looking for People Who Like to Letterhack!

There's been a lot of talk lately, in our lettercolumns, those of other companies, and in the fanzines themselves, about a "select few" letterhacks who seem to dominate the lettercols. Most of the talk has been in the form of complaints that the lettercolumns in question are not "open" to newcomers, and that certain letterhacks are "favored" by those who choose which letters to print.

Well, it ain't so, says I (Dean)! I remember years ago when a similar "complaint" cropped up about such regular letterhacks as Ralph Macchio, Mark Gruenwald, Bob Rodi, Peter Sanderson, and me! I and my esteemed friends weren't trying to hog the lettercols; we just won the luck of the draw more often than not.

And the same is true today. Regardless of whether or not your letter sees print, we do read each and every one of them. And don't forget, the more letters we receive from you, the more input you have in what goes into our comics, and the better shot you have at seeing your letter printed.

Until next month, surf's up!





NOW MONTHLY!

\$1.50  
\$1.75 in Canada

# Ms. TREE™

No. 4

by Max  
Collins  
and  
Terry  
Beatty

I HAVE A MESSAGE  
FROM **DOMINIC  
MUERTA** -



Beatty



# MS. TREE™

## "THE COLD DISH"

© 1983

Max Collins and Terry Beatty

### Chapter One

OKAY, MS. TREE. SO YOU KILLED SEVEN PEOPLE. YOU WANT TO TELL US ABOUT IT?



WHY NOT? I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE.



## The Right to Remain Silent...

YOU'RE READY TO MAKE YOUR STATEMENT, THEN.



I'M READY. AND I'LL WAIVE THE READING OF MY RIGHTS - I'M WELL AWARE OF THEM... AND THAT ANYTHING I SAY HERE CAN, AND WILL, BE USED AGAINST ME.



IT STARTS WITH YOU, CAPTAIN MEYERS. YOU STOPPED ME OUTSIDE THE COURTHOUSE, AFTER THE PATRICK RUSHING INQUEST...

YOU WERE PRETTY CUTE ON THE STAND, IN THERE.



IF YOU THOUGHT THAT WAS CUTE, YOU OUGHTA SEE ME IN A BIKINI.

FEELING PRETTY SMUG, AREN'T YOU?



LET ME SET YOU STRAIGHT, LADY - YOU JUST GOT AWAY WITH MURDER, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. AND IT DON'T SIT RIGHT WITH ME...



PATRICK RUSHING AND THAT MUERTA HITMAN KILLED EACH OTHER. I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. AND I SHOT DR. KASSEL IN SELF-DEFENSE, REMEMBER?



DON'T PATRONIZE ME, HONEY -

DON'T CALL ME "HONEY," BUSTER - IT'S TOO PATRONIZING...



I'M A COP AND I DON'T APPRECIATE VIGILANTE TACTICS, "BUSTER." MURDER IS MURDER - AND I'M GIVING YOU A CHOICE: STOP, OR I'LL PUT A STOP TO YOU.



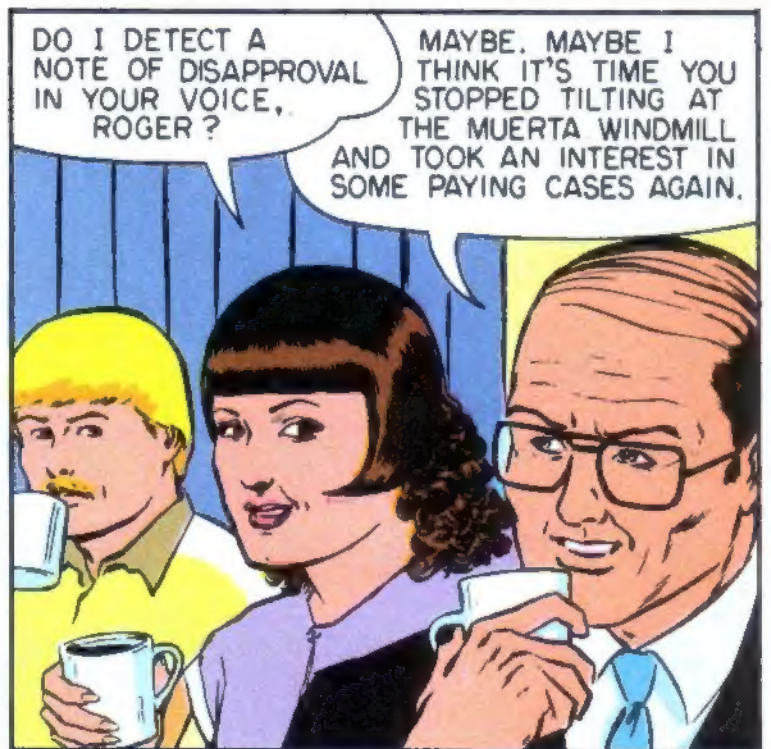
SO YOU'RE A COP? MAYBE IF YOU COPS WOULD DO YOUR JOBS - MAYBE THEN I COULD FIND A NEW HOBBY.



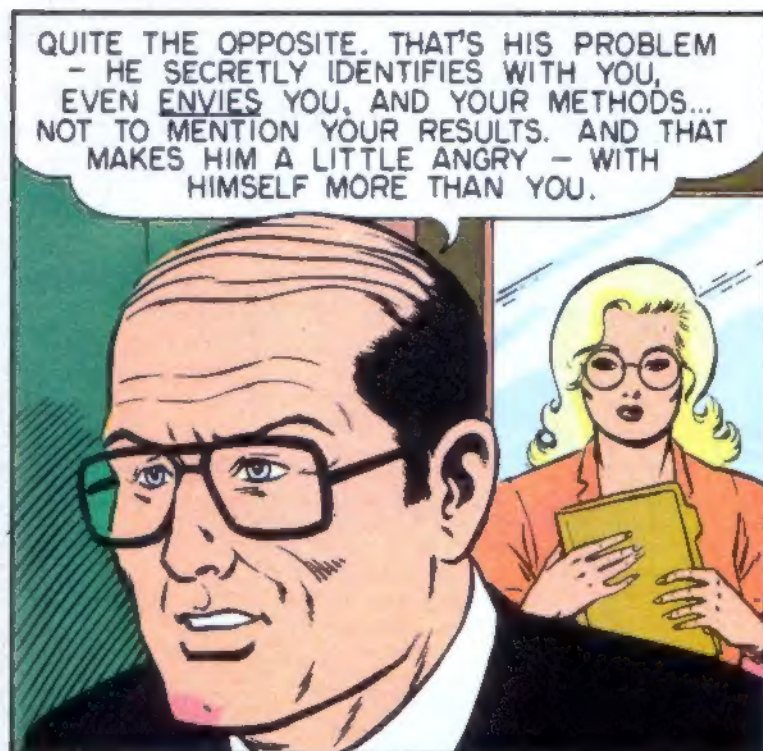
WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS WRONG, MS. TREE - YOU'RE AS DANGEROUS IN YOUR WAY AS DOMINIC MUERTA -











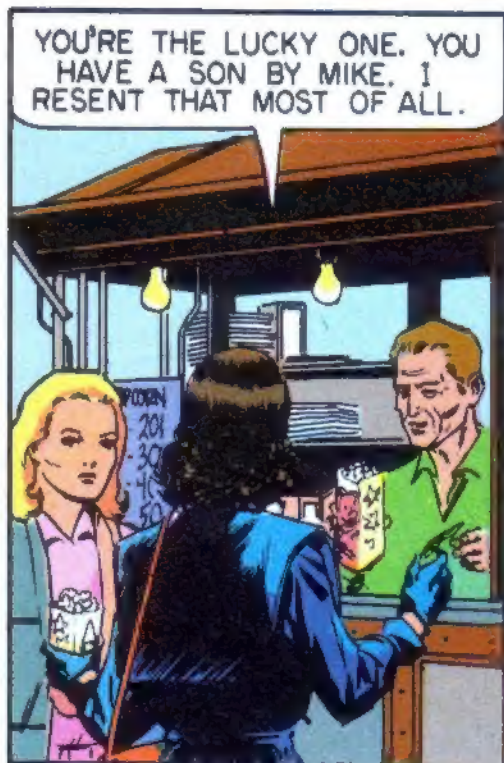
ANNE TREE - MY LATE HUSBAND MIKE'S FIRST WIFE; A WIFE HE'D NEGLECTED TO MENTION TO ME... A WIFE I FOUND OUT ABOUT ONLY AFTER HIS MURDER.



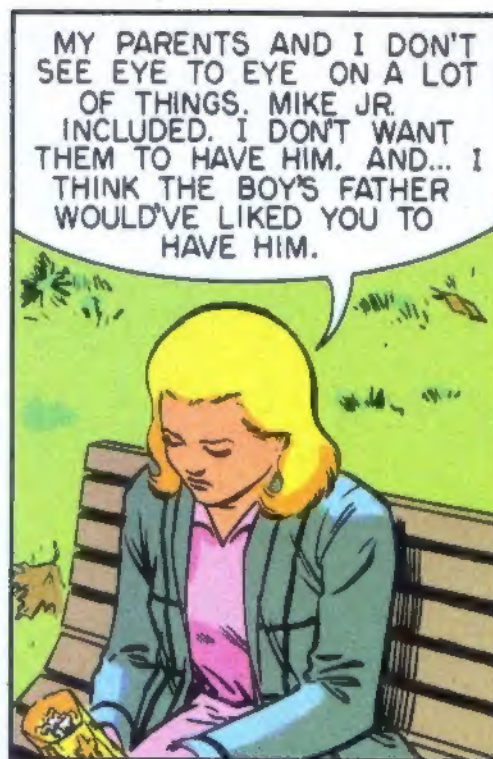
I CALLED HER AND AGREED. I SUGGESTED WE MEET IN THE PARK -



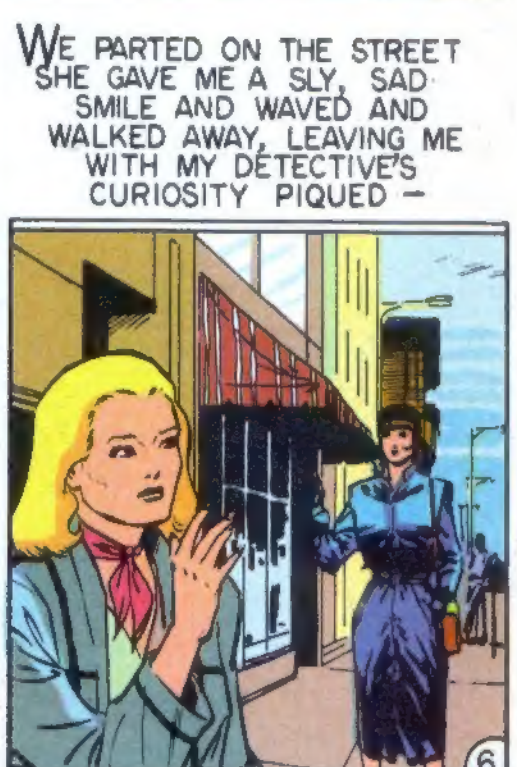








SHE'D EXPLAIN NO FURTHER; HER SILENCE WAS FRUSTRATING, BUT SHE HAD A RIGHT TO IT, I SUPPOSED. THE NEXT MORNING, THERE I WAS - SIGNING PAPERS IN HER LAWYER'S OFFICE...







IT'S NICE TO STILL HAVE A FRIEND AMONG THE BADGES, RAFE -

WELL, YOU'LL HAVE A FRIEND IN CAPTAIN MEYERS AGAIN, IF YOU KEEP YOUR NOSE CLEAN... I HOPE THIS VISIT DOESN'T RELATE TO YOUR MUERTA CRUSADE...



NO. LET'S JUST SAY THAT'S ON HOLD FOR AWHILE. I'M HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE MY HUSBAND'S FRIEND. DID HE EVER TALK TO YOU ABOUT HIS FIRST WIFE?



NO. MIKE AND I WERE FRIENDS, BUT NOT AS CLOSE AS HE AND CHICK STEELE WERE, UNFORTUNATELY.

CHICK STEELE. THE CROOKED COP WHO BETRAYED HIS FRIEND, MY HUSBAND, MY DEAD MIKE; A MAN IN LEAGUE WITH DOMINIC MUERTA, MOB BOSS OF BOSSES. STEELE WAS AWAITING TRIAL, NOW - THANKS TO ME.



I HARDLY THINK I CAN GO TO CHICK STEELE FOR HIS INSIGHT... YOU SEE, I THINK ANNE TREE MAY BE IN TROUBLE. IN DANGER, EVEN.



COULD JUST BE A MOTHERLY PRECAUTION...

I TOLD SGT. VALER ABOUT THE CUSTODY ARRANGEMENT -



NO. IT'S MORE THAN THAT. SHE WAS MELANCHOLY. PREOCCUPIED WITH DEATH - MIKE'S, PARTICULARLY.

MAYBE SHE HAS HEALTH PROBLEMS... MAYBE EVEN SOMETHING TERMINAL.



SUICIDE! SHE COULD BE PLANNING TO TAKE HER OWN LIFE, AND WANTS TO HAVE HER KID'S FUTURE SECURE, BEFORE CHECKING OUT!

SNAP





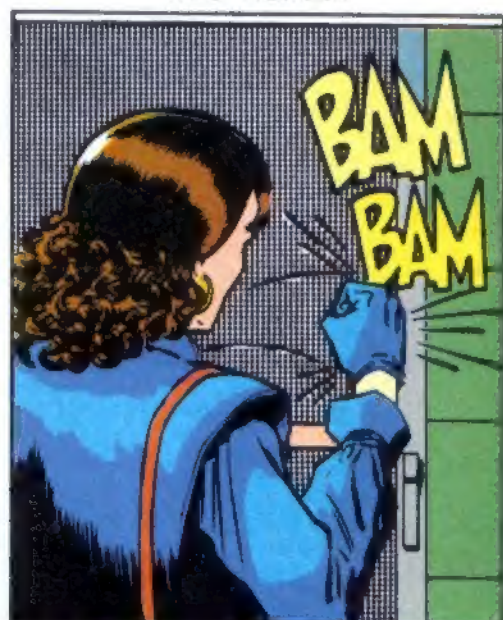
I WAS DETERMINED TO HEAD OFF WHAT INSTINCT TOLD ME WAS ANNE TREE'S IMMINENT SELF-DESTRUCTION. I HAD THE SURENESS, THE SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, OF A TV PREACHER...



AND I WAS JUST AS FULL OF CRAP. ANNE TREE, AS I WAS RUSHING TO HER SUBURBAN HOME, WAS SHOPPING FOR CLOTHES - FOR MIKE JR.



THERE WAS NO ANSWER AT ANNE TREE'S DOOR, BUT THAT DIDN'T CONVINCE ME NOBODY WAS HOME...



I HAD A LITTLE TROUBLE GETTING IN ANNE TREE'S PLACE - HER FRONT AND BACK DOORS HAD DEADBOLT LOCKS, THE WINDOWS WERE SEALED TIGHT... SO I JIMMIED OPEN ONE OF THE BASEMENT WINDOWS...



I PROWLED THE HOUSE AND FOUND NOTHING... EXCEPT OCCASIONAL REMINDERS OF WHAT ANNE TREE AND I HAD IN COMMON.

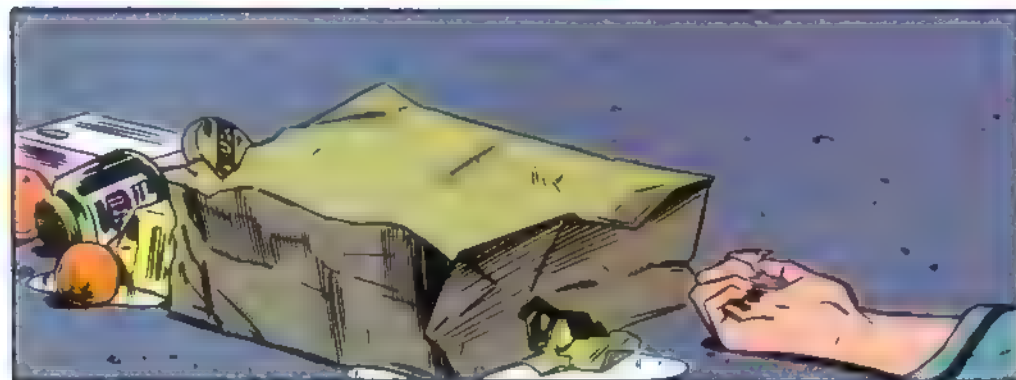
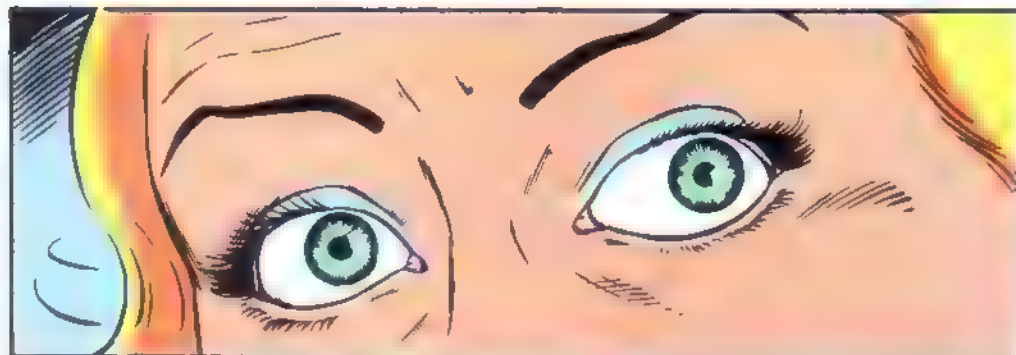
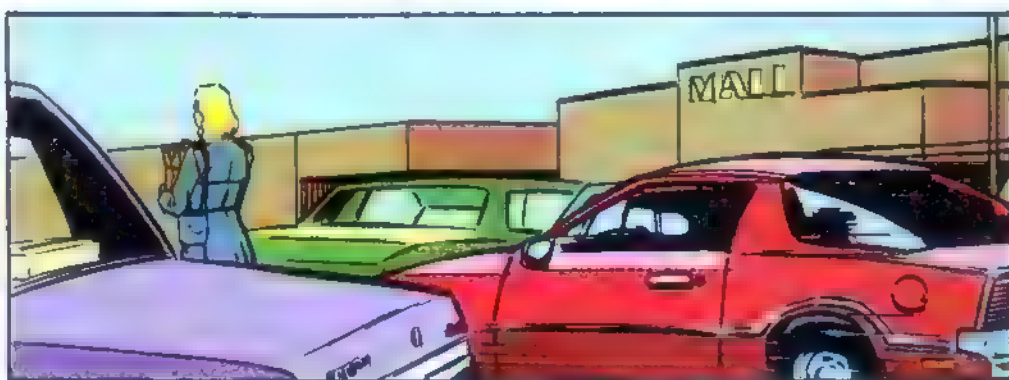
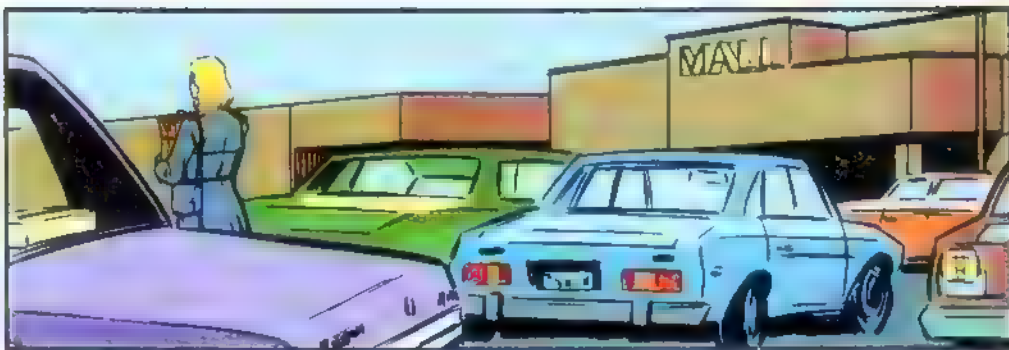


I'D FOLLOWED A HUNCH AS IF IT WERE A FACT, AND HAD THE EGG ON MY FACE TO PROVE IT. I DECIDED I BETTER SIT AND WAIT FOR ANNE TREE - TO EXPLAIN THE DAMAGED WINDOW, IF NOTHING ELSE...



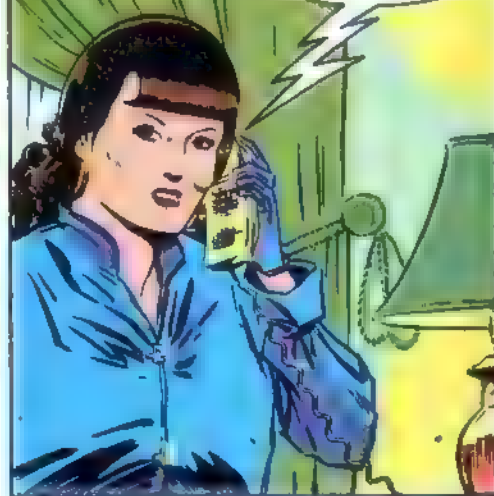


AT THAT MOMENT, A FEW  
BLOCKS AWAY, ANNE TREE  
WAS CARRYING GROCERIES  
TO HER CAR IN A  
SUPERMARKET LOT -



THIS IS THE  
ANNE TREE  
RESIDENCE.

IS THAT  
YOU,  
MS TREE?  
THOUGHT I'D  
FIND YOU  
THERE...



ANNE TREE IS DEAD.  
KILLED BY A  
HIT-AND-RUN DRIVER.



HI, LADY. WHAT ARE  
YOU DOIN' HERE?



MY MOM WAS SUPPOSED TO  
PICK ME UP AT SCHOOL, BUT  
SHE NEVER SHOWED. DO YOU  
KNOW WHERE SHE IS?



CONTINUED THIS ISSUE



# THE SCYTHER

**"HAVE YOU MET MISS JONES?"**

GOD, DOES MY HEAD HURT! ONE MINUTE I WRESTLE TWO SACKS FROM THOSE GOONS ON THE WATERFRONT, AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW, I WAKE UP ON THE PIER WITH A HEADACHE THE SIZE OF NEW JERSEY!

THOSE MUGS IN THE SCUBA OUTFITS WERE THE SAME ONES I TACKLED AT PATTERSON'S THE OTHER NIGHT. THAT MAKES ANOTHER CONNECTION BETWEEN JOHNNY'S DEATH AND THE BUTTON MAN. I THINK IT'S TIME I SHADOWED THAT SON-OF-A-BITCH.

RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, I THINK I'LL TAKE A COUPLE OF ASPIRINS AND CATCH SOME SLEEP.

**BZZZZZ  
BZZZZZZZ**

SHIT! WHO CAN THAT BE AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?

WRITER:  
DEAN MULLANEY

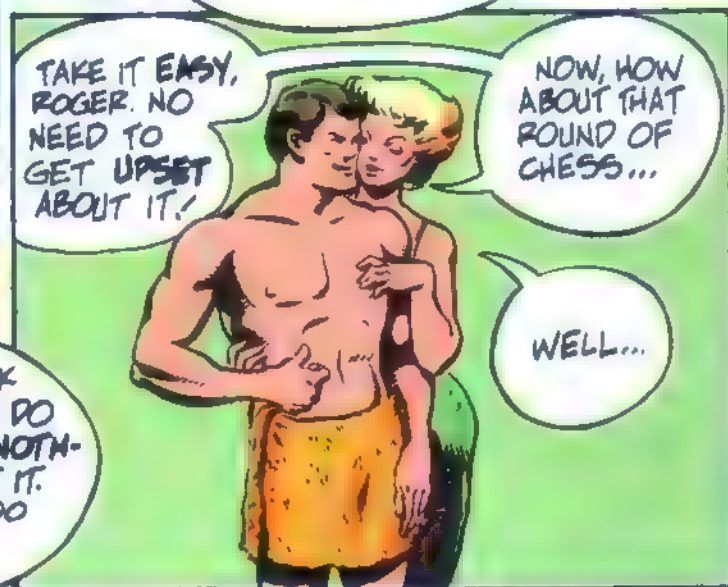
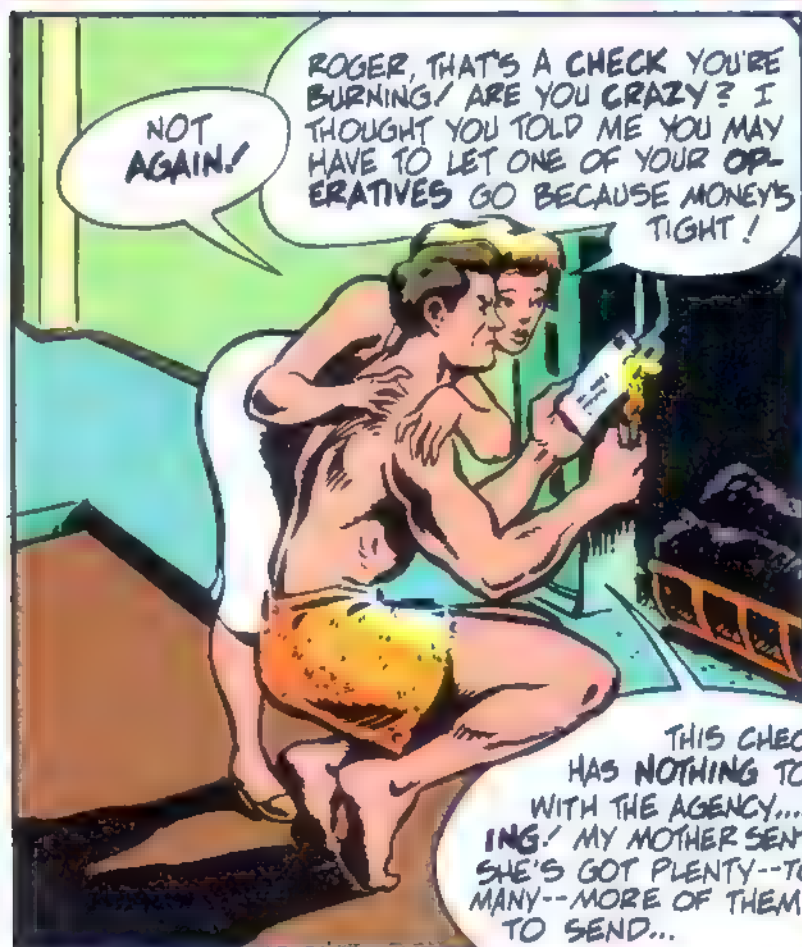
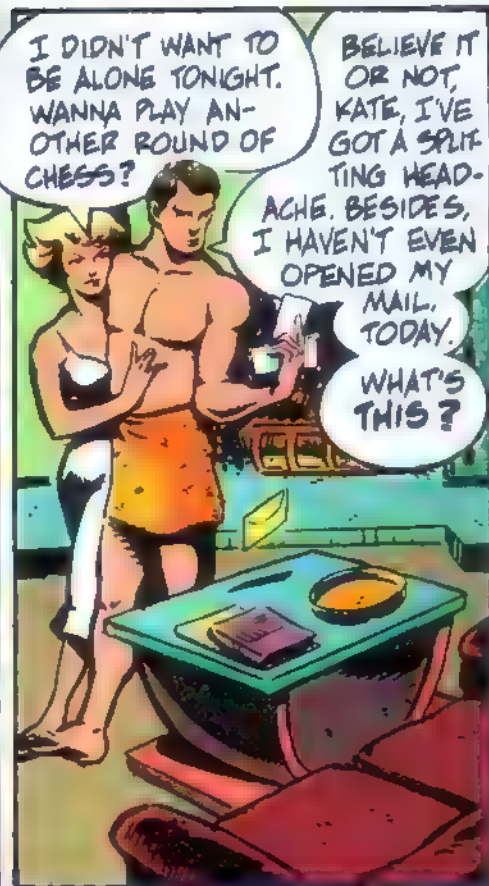
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ELLIS GOODSON

INKER & LETTERER:  
WAYNE TRUMAN

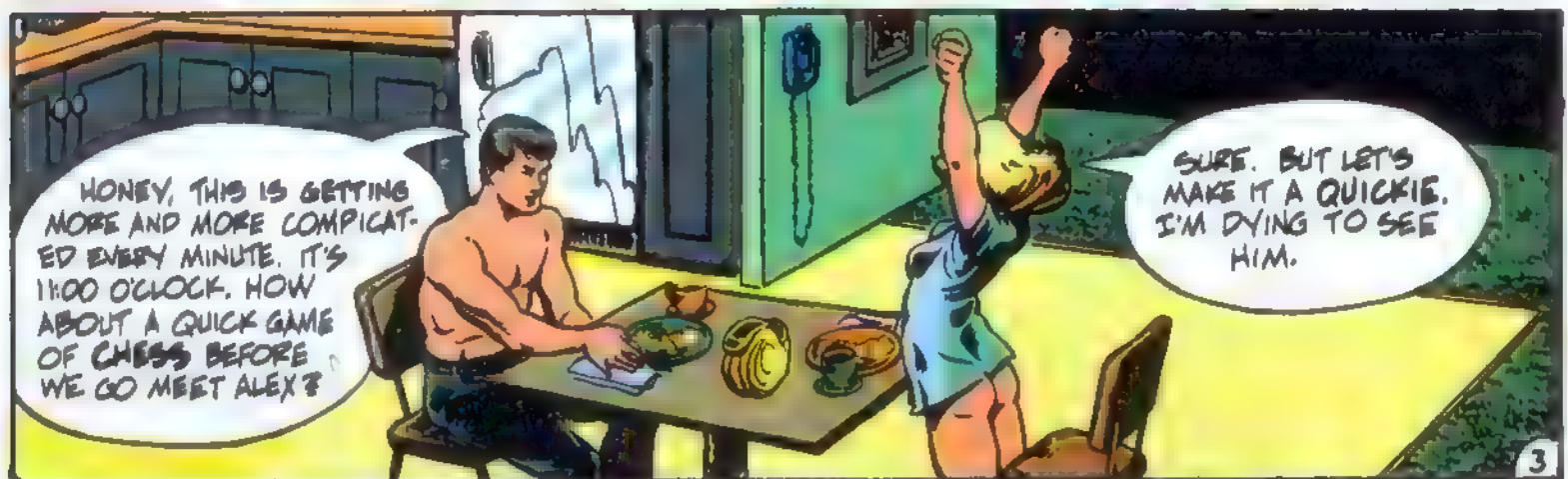
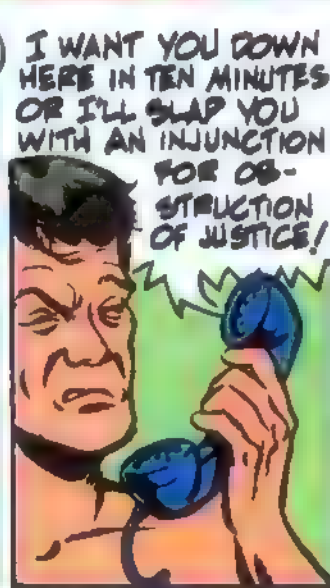
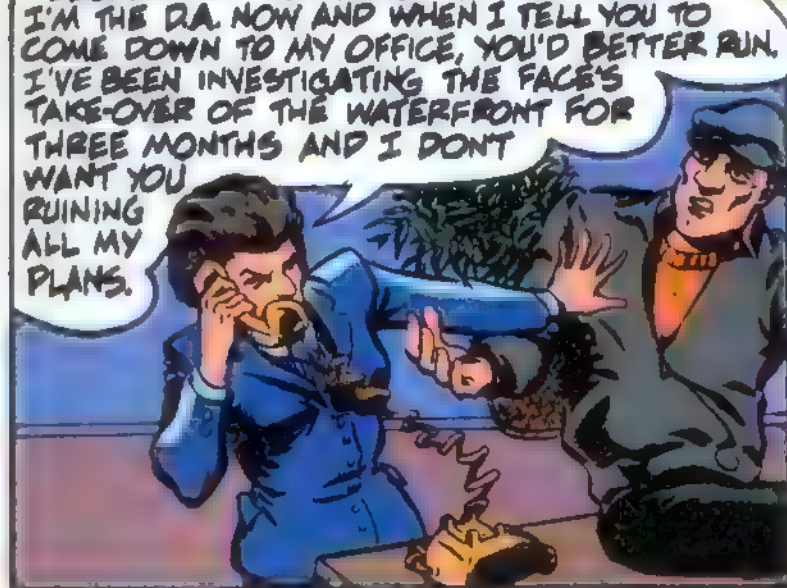
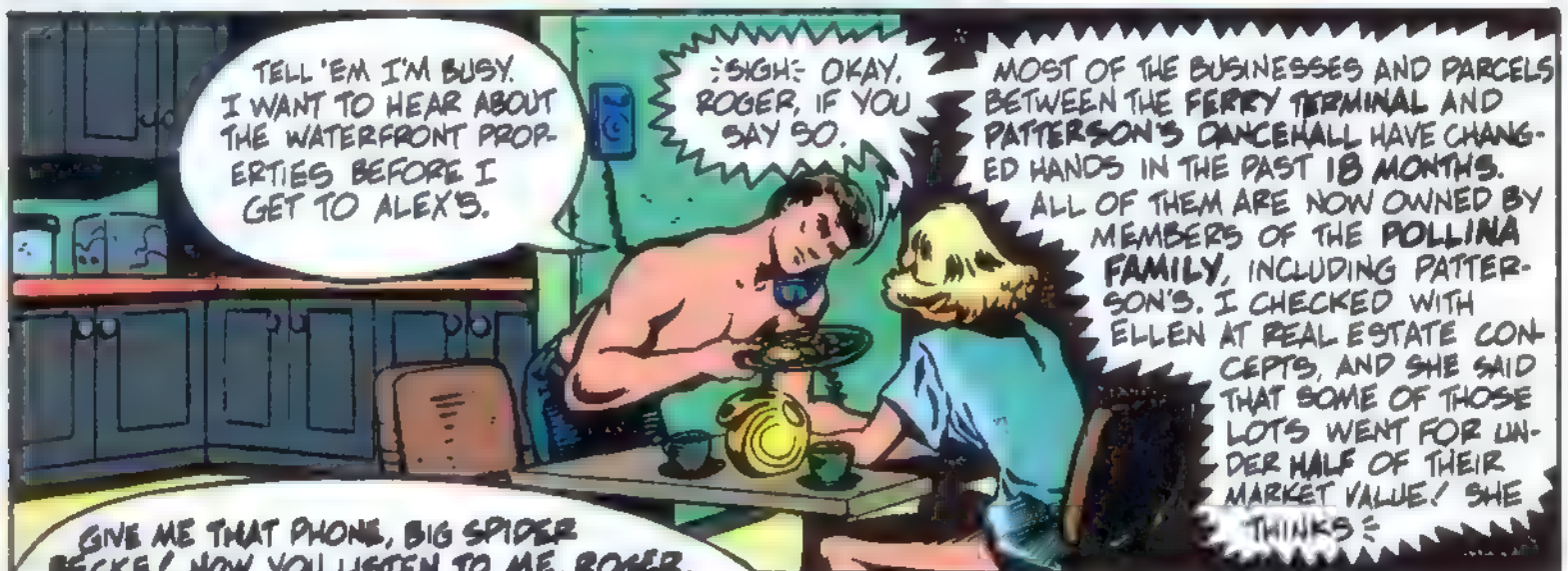
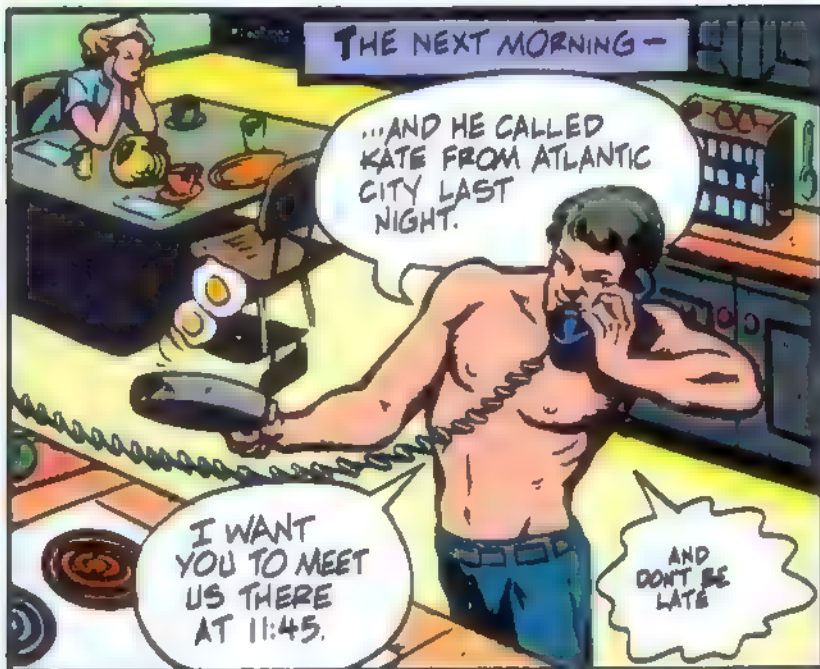
COLORIST:  
DENIS MCFARLING

EDITOR:  
CAT @ YRONWODE

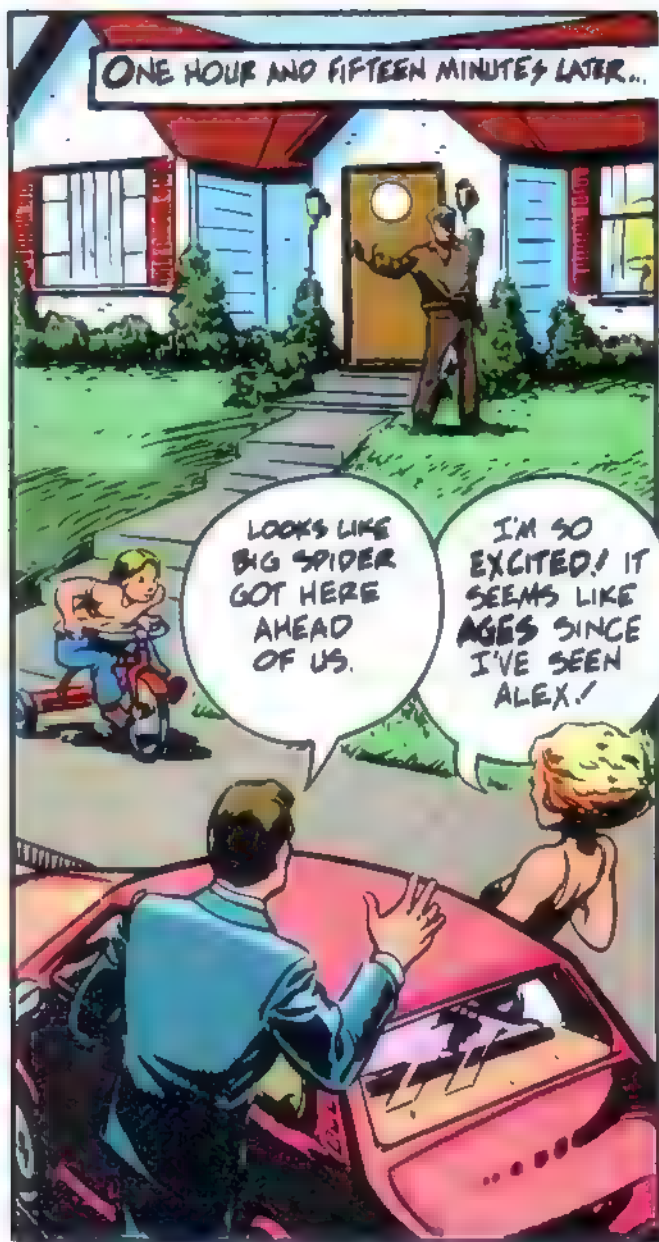












LOOKS LIKE  
BIG SPIDER  
GOT HERE  
AHEAD  
OF US.

I'M SO  
EXCITED! IT  
SEEMS LIKE  
AGES SINCE  
I'VE SEEN  
ALEX!



BOSS, I THINK YOU'D BETTER  
GO IN THERE FIRST--



NOOOOOO...



OH MY GOD!!



I DON'T KNOW,  
MS. SCHUYLER.

LOOK AT  
THESE  
GLASSES.  
A BULLET  
HOLE  
THROUGH  
THE CENTER  
OF EACH  
LENS.

DAMN!  
LIKE JOHNNY,  
I THINK THIS  
POOR GUY JUST SAW  
TOO MUCH. BUT WHAT?



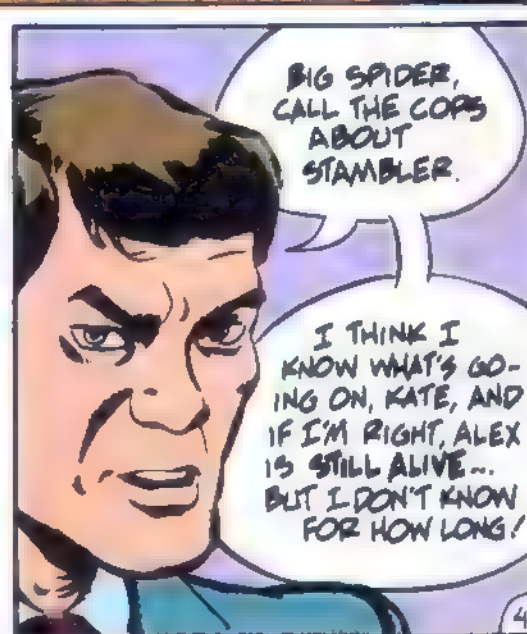
TASTES LIKE COCAINE  
TO ME!

THINGS  
ARE  
STARTING  
TO FALL  
INTO PLACE  
NOW!



COCAINE, HUH?

ROGER, WHAT  
ARE WE GOING TO  
DO ABOUT MIKE...  
AND ALEX?



BIG SPIDER,  
CALL THE COPS  
ABOUT  
STAMBLER.

I THINK I  
KNOW WHAT'S GO-  
ING ON, KATE, AND  
IF I'M RIGHT, ALEX  
IS STILL ALIVE...  
BUT I DON'T KNOW  
FOR HOW LONG!



LATER THAT AFTERNOON, IN THE CHOIR LOFT BAR DOWN THE STREET FROM THE GREEN LANTERN... DETECTIVE RUSTY BRACES IS JUST GETTING OFF DUTY...

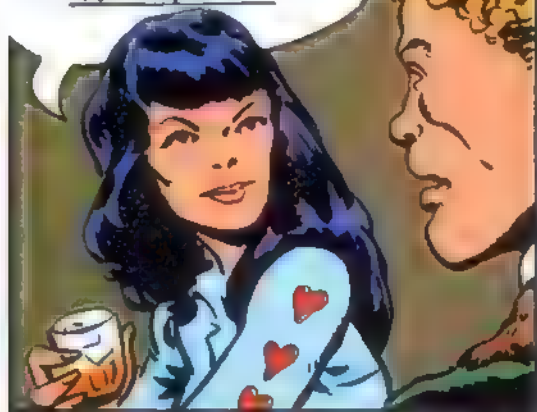


HIYA, WARREN. GIMME A BASS ALE. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE DAY I'

WE'LL LOOK WHO'S HERE.

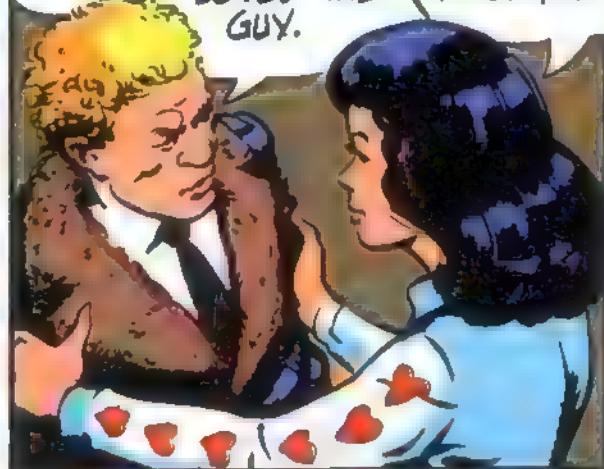
NOT ANY LONGER YOU'RE NOT!

ARE YOU STUPID?! OR DO THEY TEACH YOU TO ACT LIKE A JERK DOWN AT HEADQUARTERS?



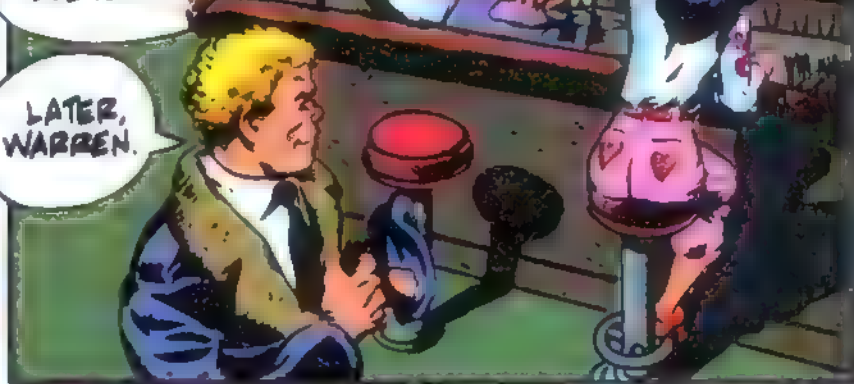
I'M SORRY, OKAY? YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT JOHNNY MEANT TO ME. I REALLY LOVED THE GUY.

Y'KNOW, MAYBE YOU'RE NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.

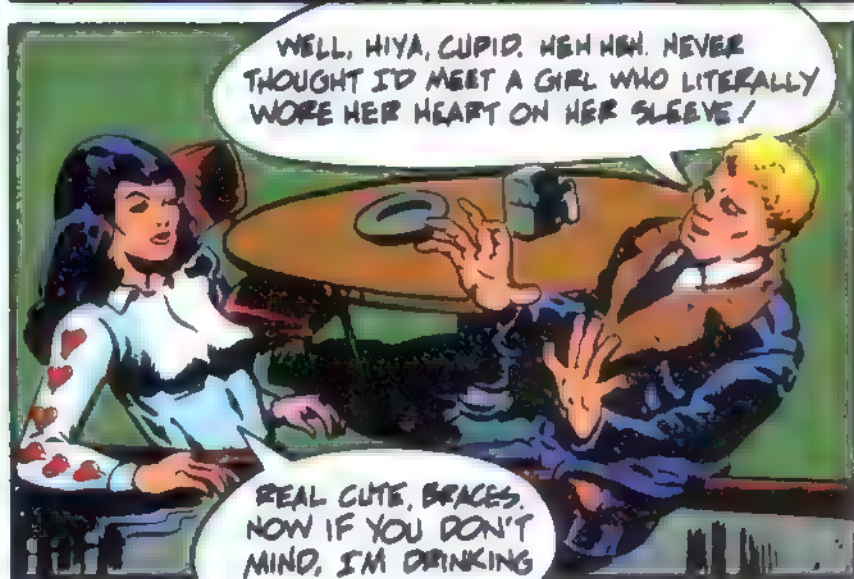


YOU THINK YOU HAD A ROUGH DAY, LET ME TELL YOU?

LATER, WARREN.



WELL, HIYA, CUPID. HEH HEH. NEVER THOUGHT I'D MEET A GIRL WHO LITERALLY WORE HER HEART ON HER SLEEVE!



REAL CUTE, BRACES. NOW IF YOU DON'T MIND, I'M DRINKING ALONE!

AW, C'MON, CUPID. JUST GIMME A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.

SO LIKE I WUZ SAYIN', RUSTY, FROM THE TIME I WALKED IN THE DOOR THIS MORNING—

LATER, WARREN.

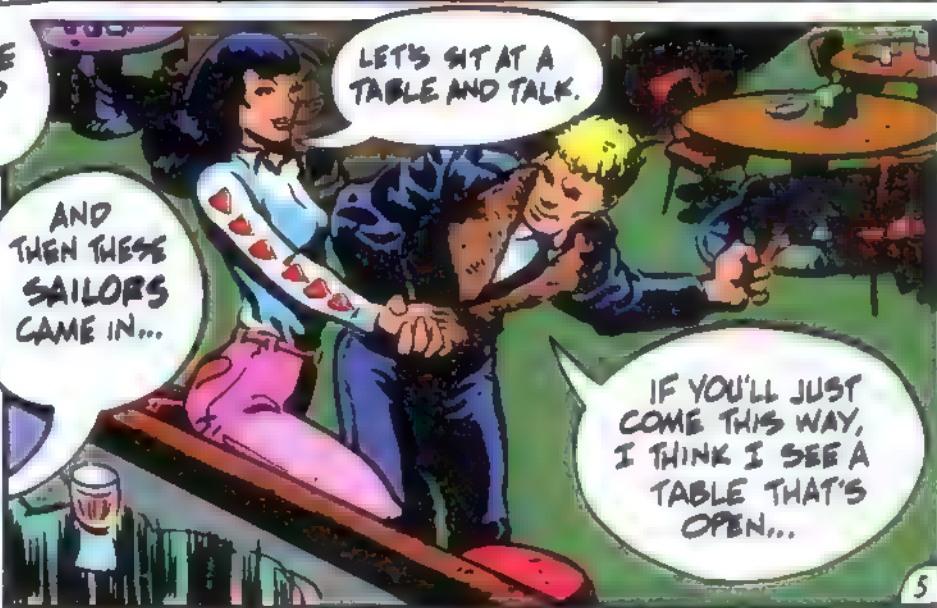


SURE, AND WHY DON'T I LET YOU GRAB MY WRISTS AND DRAG ME ACROSS THE ROOM AGAIN LIKE YOU DID AT PATTERSON'S!?! YOU GOT ME IN A LOT OF TROUBLE WITH THAT MOVE.

LET'S SIT AT A TABLE AND TALK.

AND THEN THESE SAILORS CAME IN...

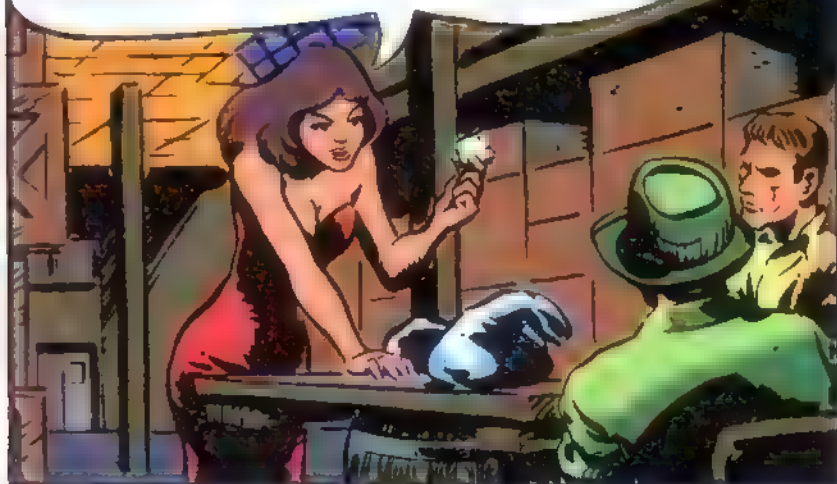
IF YOU'LL JUST COME THIS WAY, I THINK I SEE A TABLE THAT'S OPEN...





NINE O'CLOCK THAT NIGHT...

THIS HAIL IS GOING TO MAKE THE THREE OF US RICH. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO DO WITH YOUR SHARE, BUT ME...I'M BUYING MYSELF A WHOLE NEW LIFE. I'M GOING TO MAKE A NEW START SOMEWHERE FAR, FAR AWAY FROM HERE.



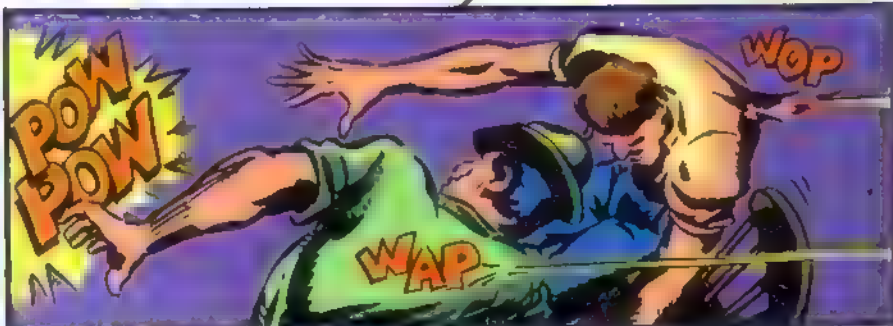
I SUGGEST YOU TWO HEAD AS FAR AWAY AS YOU CAN, TOO. FRANKIE, NOW YOU'RE SURE THE FACE'S PEOPLE DON'T KNOW YOU'RE THE INSIDE MAN?

I'M SURE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, RUBY. WE'LL BE LONG GONE BEFORE THEY FIGURE OUT WHAT HAPPENED!



YOU ALWAYS WERE AN OVERCONFIDENT FOOL, FRANKIE!

THE BUTTON MAN!



WELL, WELL. AIN'T THE FACE GONNA BE SURPRISED TO LEARN WHO'S BEHIND THIS LITTLE AFFAIR!



IF IT ISN'T RUBY LITH, HIS DARLING ELDEST DAUGHTER!!

Y'KNOW, YOU AND YOUR GODAMNED SISTER GET AWAY WITH MURDER WITH THE OLD MAN. I'VE BEEN HOPING TO FIND ONE OF YOU IN A POSITION LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME!

YOU WOULDN'T DARE!



JUST YOU WAIT!





# Frank Miller's "Famous Detective Pin-Up" No. 4

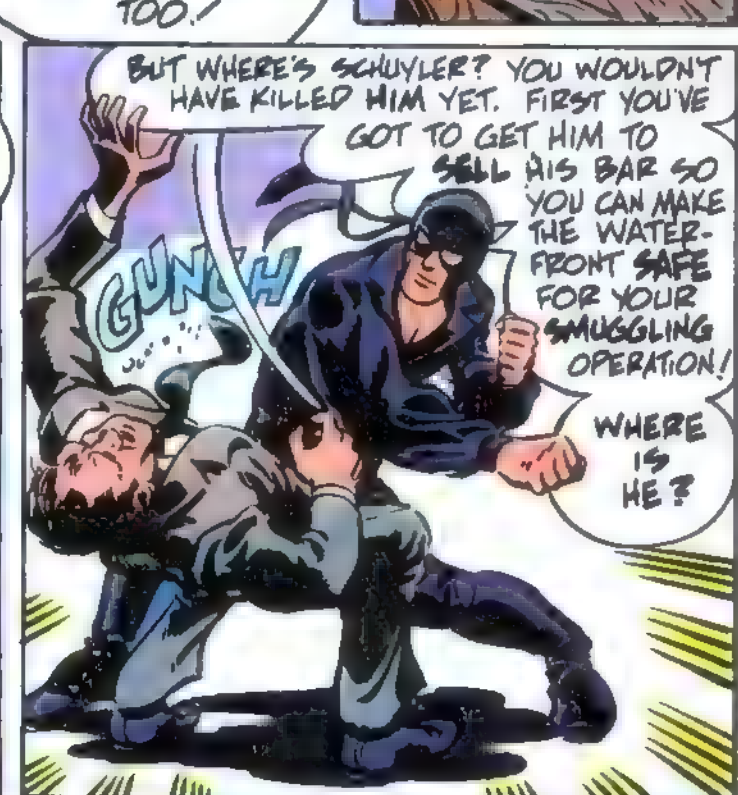
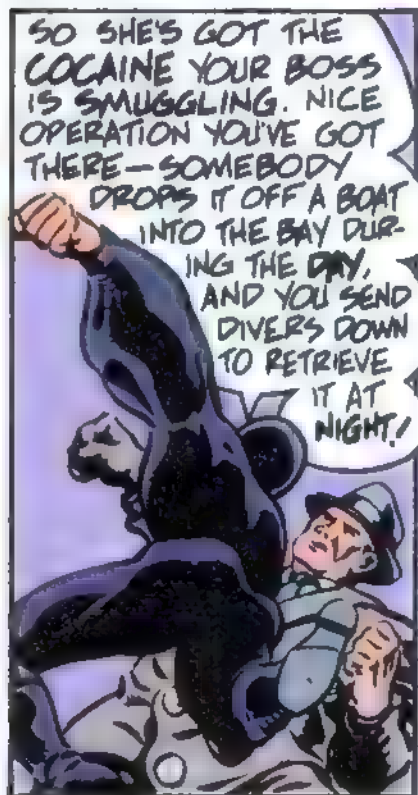
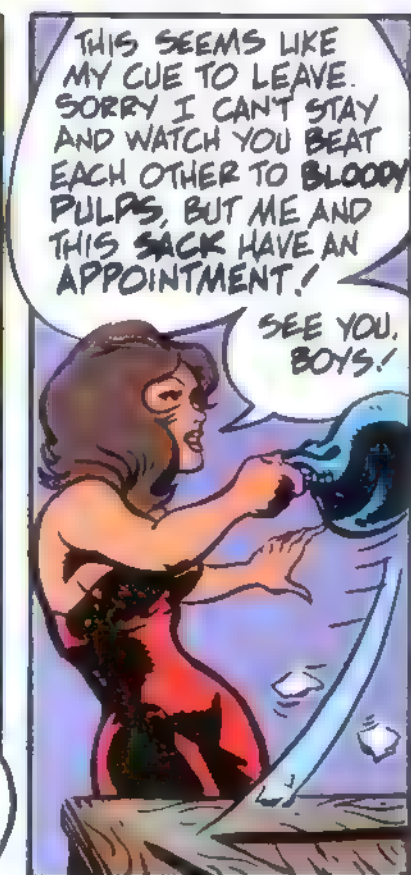
## Nancy Drew

Nancy Drew, the daring teenage daughter of lawyer Carson Drew, is the world's foremost "girl sleuth." Dressed in a blue frock, and driving a roadster as blue as her eyes, this resourceful young woman has solved many a mystery and saved many a life in her 18 years.

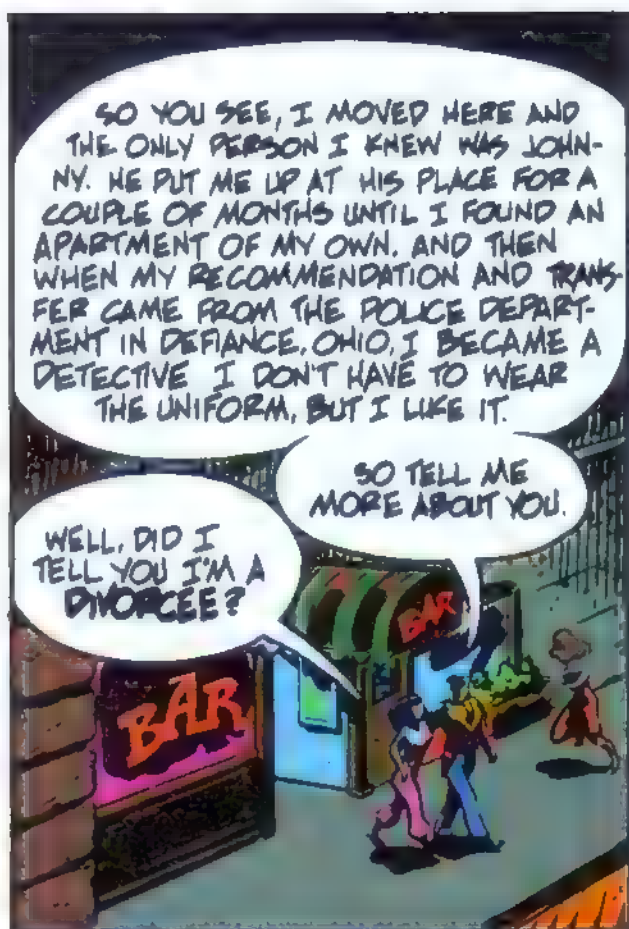
The Nancy Drew series was created in 1929 by Edward Stratemeyer, under the pseudonym of "Carolyn Keene." When Stratemeyer died in 1930, his daughter, Harriet S. Adams, took over both the series and the pen name. Adams wrote one Nancy Drew novel per year for over three decades, and with periodic updating and revisions, they are all still in print, having sold millions of copies.











**NEXT  
ISSUE**

- CUPID and RUSTY!
- THE SCYTHE and RUBY!
- THE BUTTON MAN and THE COPS!
- AND WHERE IS ALEX SCHUYLER?

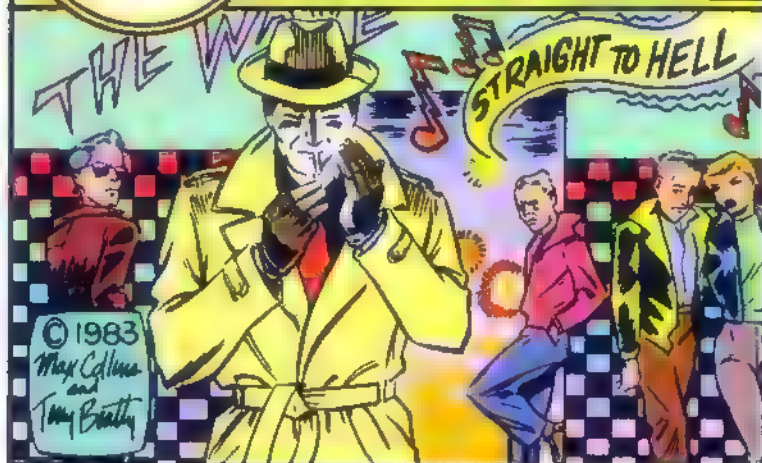
**DON'T  
MISS IT-  
JUST  
30 DAYS  
FROM  
NOW!**



# DAMSEL in this DRESS

A  
**MIKE  
MIST**  
2-MINUTE  
MIST-ERY

"I'D SPENT THE EVENING PERUSING THE NEW WAVE CLUBS, LOOKING FOR AN OUT-OF-TOWN CLIENT'S RUNAWAY DAUGHTER. I HADN'T FOUND HER."

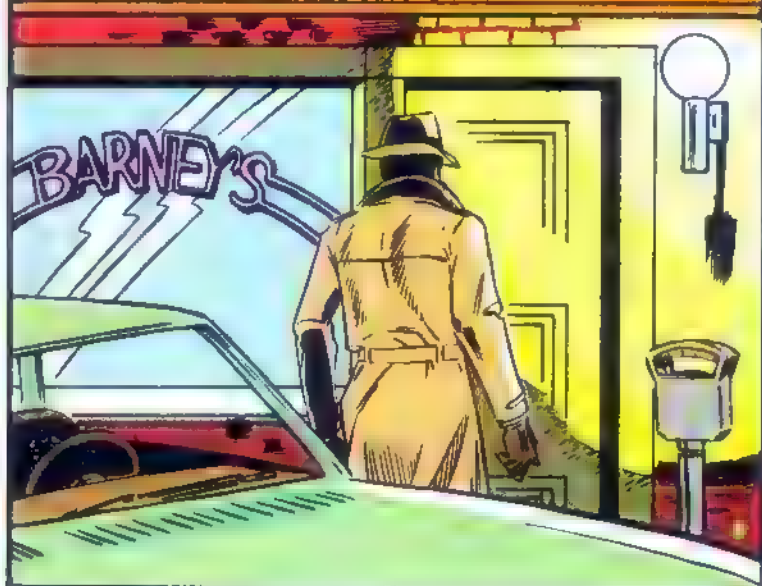


© 1983  
Max Collins  
and  
Tony Bratty

"I HADN'T FOUND ANYTHING, EXCEPT A CASE OF THE BLUES - PUNK MUSIC LEFT ME COLD. I LIKED THE BIG BAND SOUND, EVEN IF IT WAS BEFORE MY TIME.... ..OR WAS I JUST A MAN OUT OF TIME?"



"THE RUNAWAY WAS A VACATION COMPARED TO THE INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE MATTER I'D FINISHED UP EARLIER TODAY, STASHING THE MATERIAL I'D GATHERED IN MY WALL SAFE AT HOME."



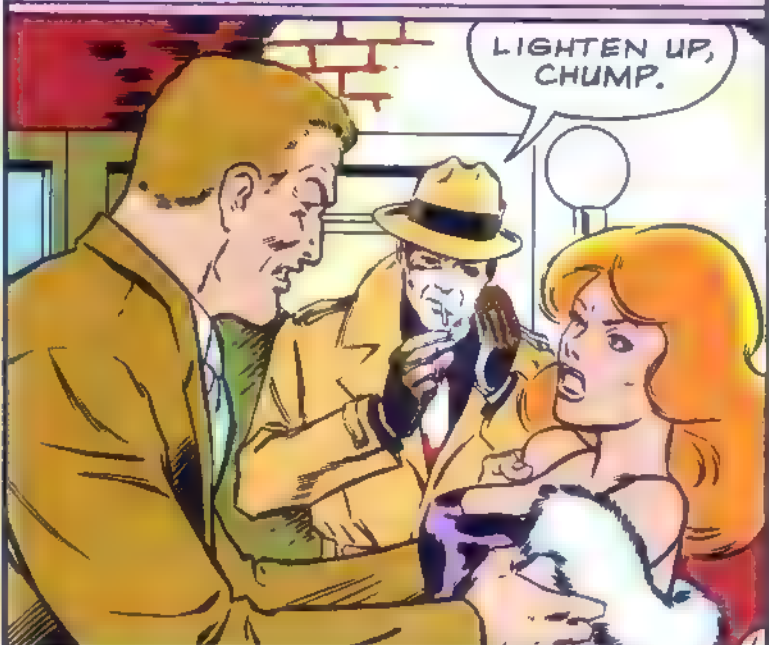
"A LONG DAY DESERVES A BEER - OR THREE. BARNEY'S WAS MY USUAL HANGOUT BUT TONIGHT THERE WERE SOME NEW FACES...AND A NEW BODY."



"SHE WAS A KNOCKOUT, ALL RIGHT - BUT SO, IN HIS WAY, WAS THE GUY WITH HER."



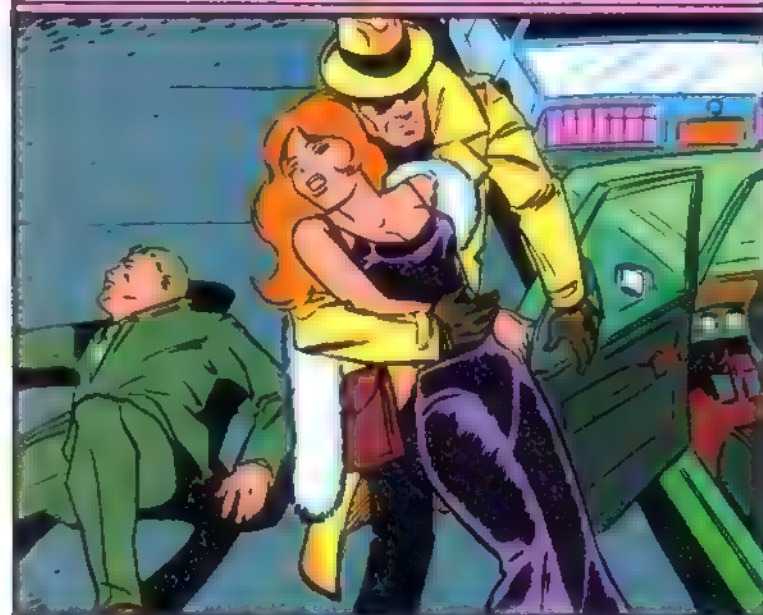
"OKAY, SO I'M A BUSHBODY - BUT I DIDN'T LIKE THE WAY HE WAS MANHANDLING HER."



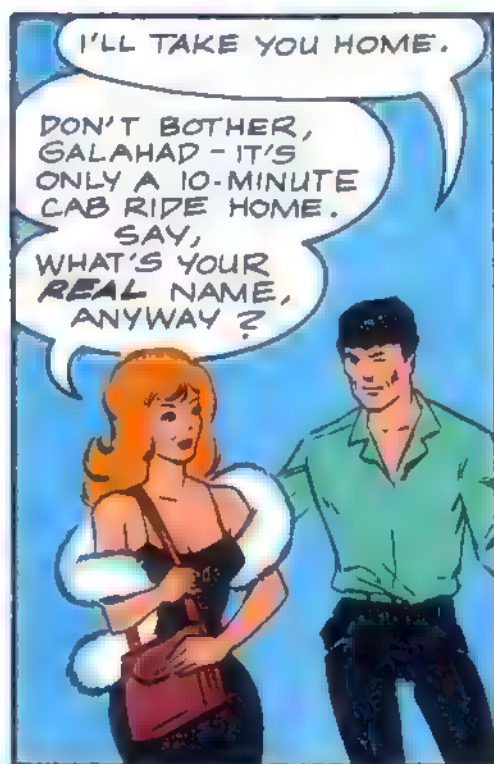
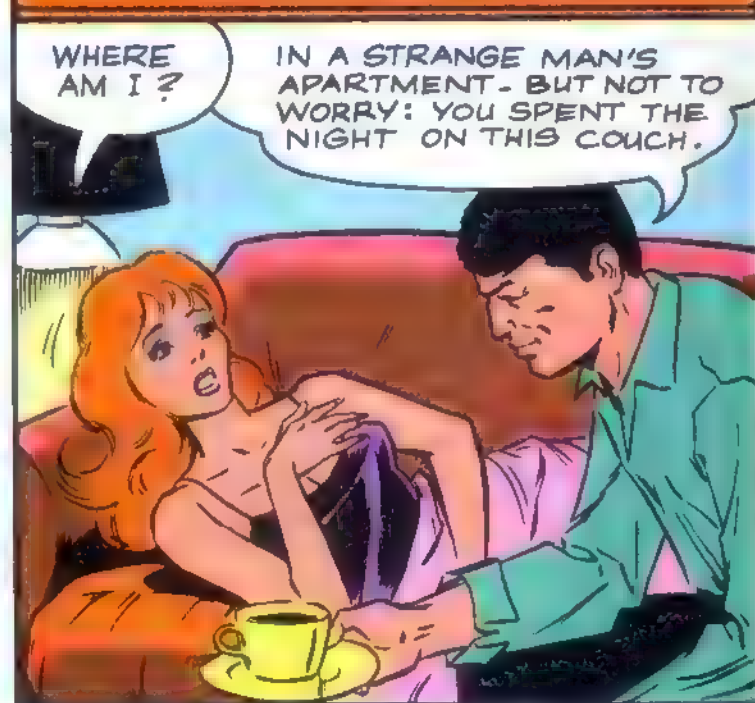




"SHE'D HAD A LITTLE TOO MUCH EXCITEMENT - AND LIQUOR - FOR ONE NIGHT. I DECIDED TO GET HER OUT OF HERE BEFORE HER ADMIRER WOKE UP."



"THE NEXT MORNING SHE WOKE UP."





# MS. TREE

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Max Collins and Terry Beatty

## "THE COLD DISH"

### Chapter Two

# NO USE CRYING



AND SHE'D LEFT ME WITH A BIG RESPONSIBILITY: HER SON. AND TELLING HIM HIS MOTHER WAS DEAD WAS WHERE MY RESPONSIBILITY BEGAN...







DO YOU NEED ANY  
HELP PACKING  
YOUR THINGS?

I'M NOT  
A KID,  
LADY.



I KNOW YOU AREN'T,  
MIKE. I JUST WANT  
TO HELP, IF I CAN.



MY MOM TOLD ME ABOUT  
YOU SHE SAID YOU WERE  
MY DAD'S WIFE. THE WIFE  
AFTER HER, I MEAN.



DID...DID SHE TELL YOU  
SHE'D MADE ME YOUR...  
LEGAL GUARDIAN, IF...

IF SOMETHING  
HAPPENED TO  
HER? YEAH.

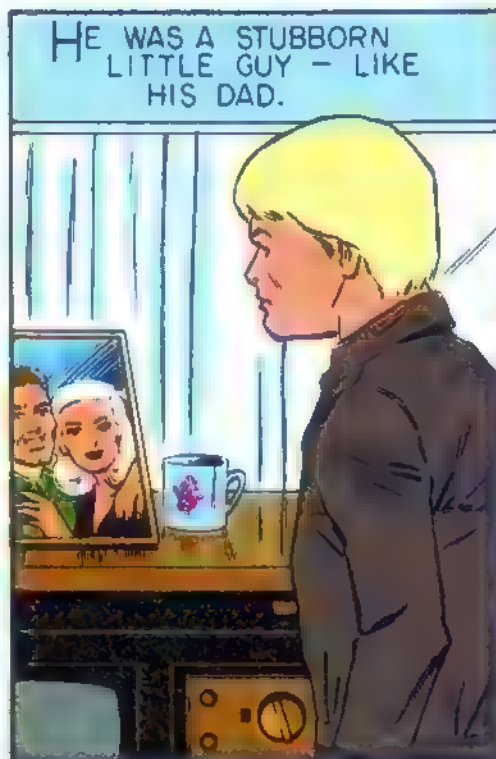


NO OFFENSE, LADY -  
BUT I'D JUST AS SOON  
LIVE WITH MY GRAND-  
PARENTS. I LIKE  
THEM FINE.



AND YOU DON'T  
LIKE ME?

LADY,  
I DON'T  
EVEN KNOW  
YOU.



HE WAS A STUBBORN  
LITTLE GUY - LIKE  
HIS DAD.



THAT UNGUARDED MOMENT  
WHEN HE TUMBLED INTO MY  
ARMS, UPON HEARING HIS  
MOTHER WAS DEAD, HAD  
LONG SINCE PASSED. HE  
WAS TURNING COLD ON ME,  
NOW - AND HIS GRIEF WAS  
PRIVATELY HELD.



I'D CALLED FROM ANNE TREE'S HOUSE TO  
ARRANGE FOR EFFIE TO USE THE SPARE  
KEY AND MEET US AT MY APARTMENT -



MIKE, I'M LEAVING YOU HERE  
WITH EFFIE. SHE WAS A FRIEND  
OF YOUR FATHER'S, TOO -



NO. HIS SECRETARY.  
SHE'S VERY NICE -  
DON'T TAKE THIS  
OUT ON HER, OKAY?



YEAH.  
SURE.



THERE'S SOMETHING  
I'VE GOT TO CHECK  
UP ON, MIKE. I'LL  
BE BACK IN A  
LITTLE WHILE.



I DON'T  
CARE.

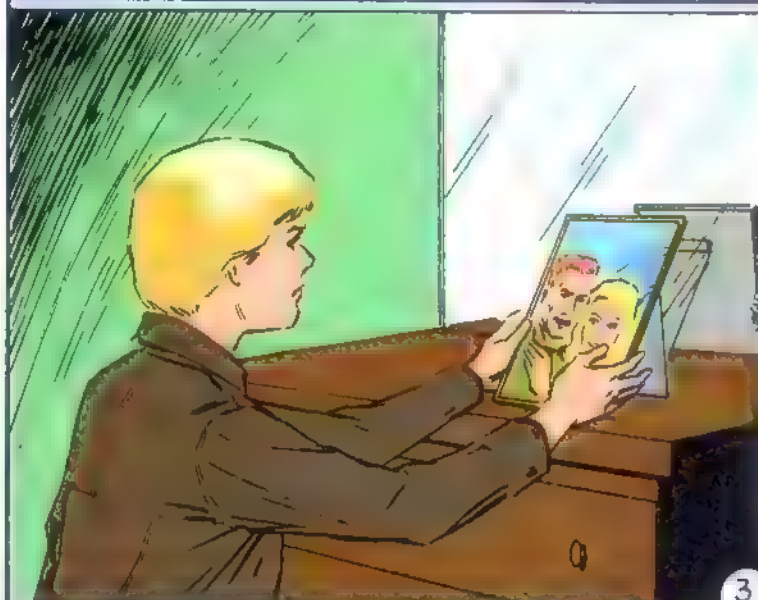


LOOK AFTER  
HIM, EFFIE.

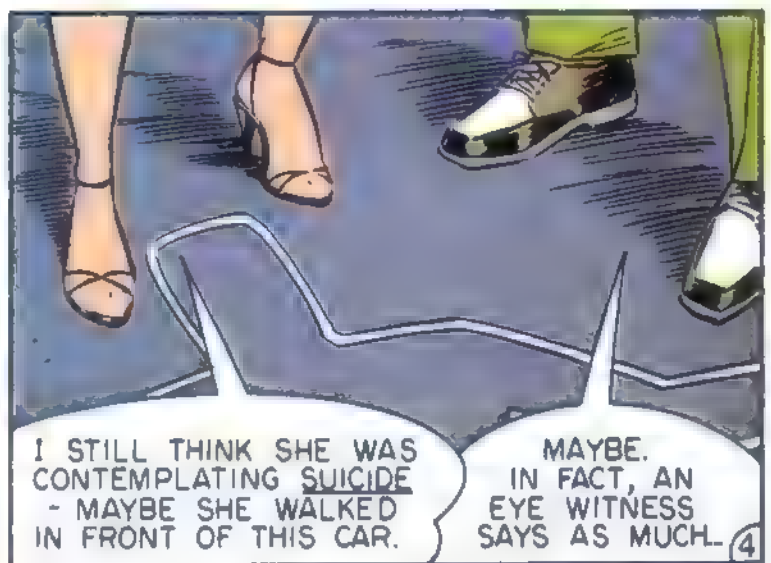
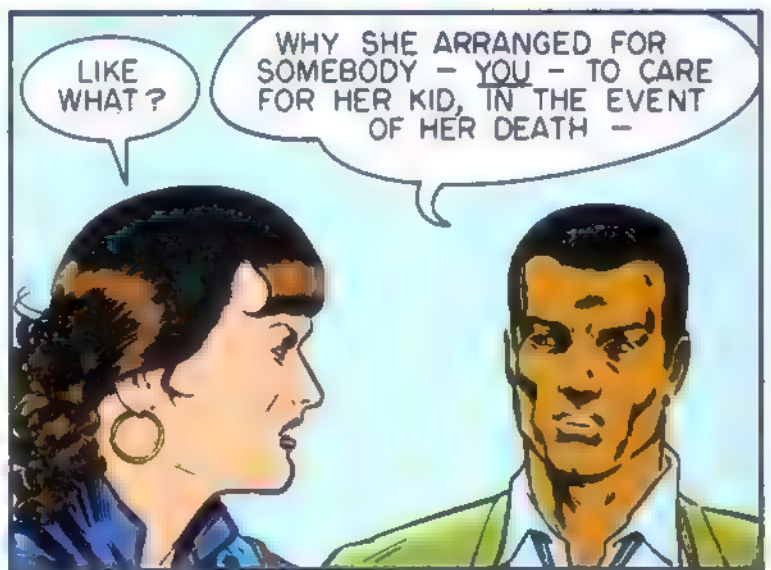
I WILL. DON'T  
WORRY - HE'LL  
BE OKAY -



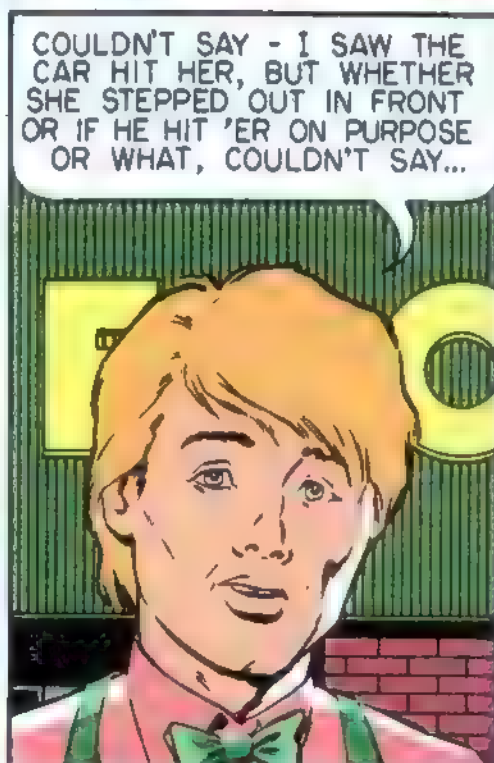
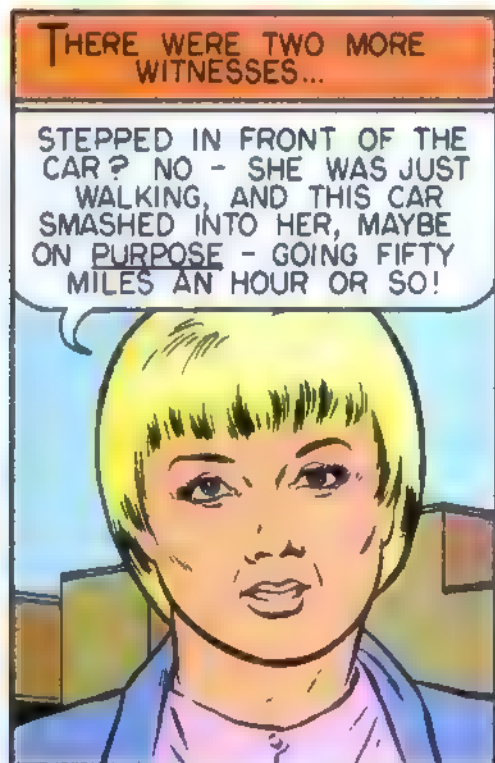
WOULD HE? OH, HE'D BE "OKAY," AFTER A  
TIME - BUT HE'D NEVER BE THE SAME  
AGAIN - YOU NEVER ARE, AFTER YOU LOSE  
A LOVED ONE BY VIOLENCE -



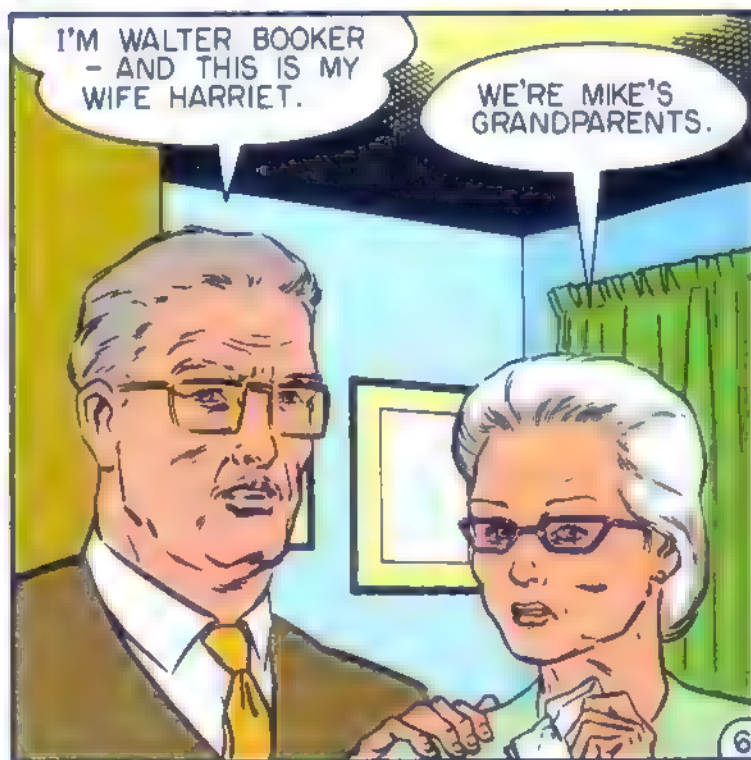
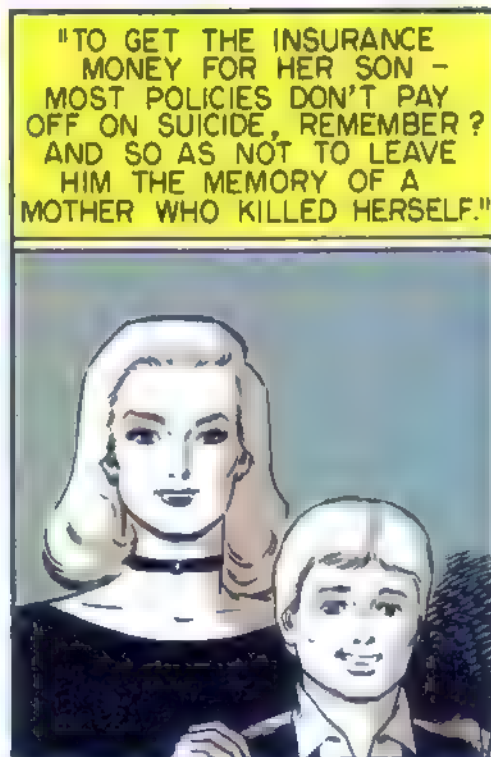
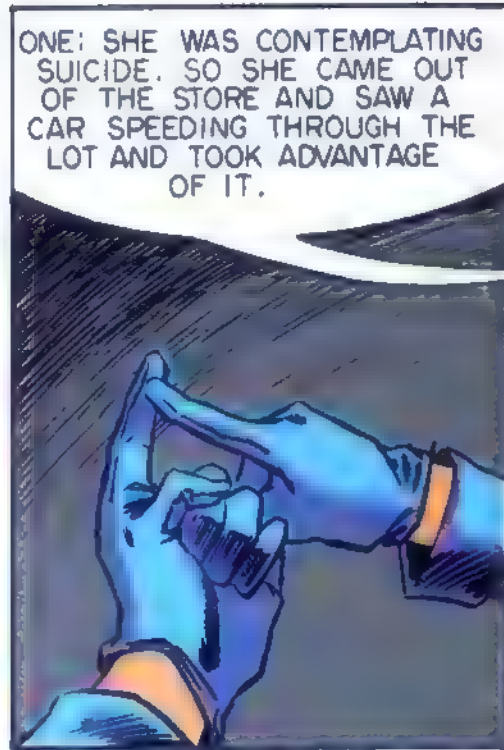




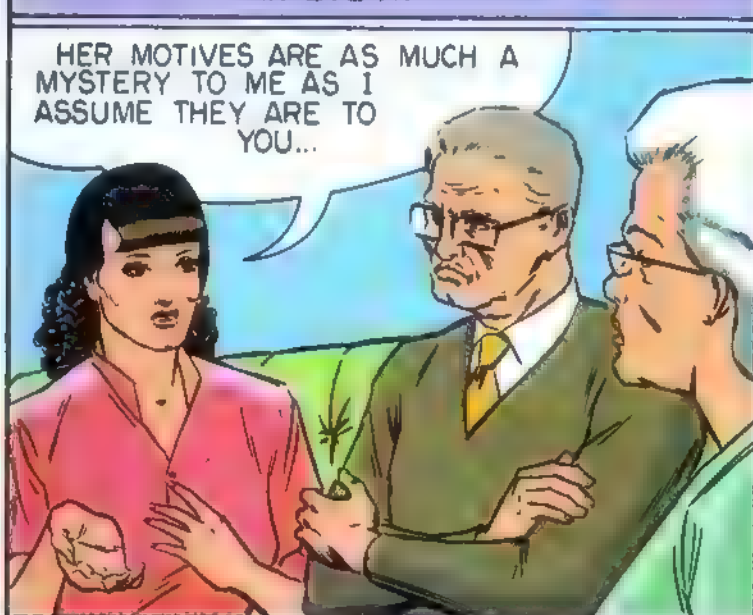
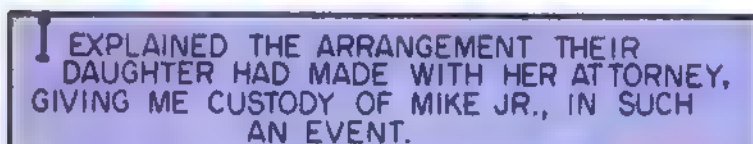




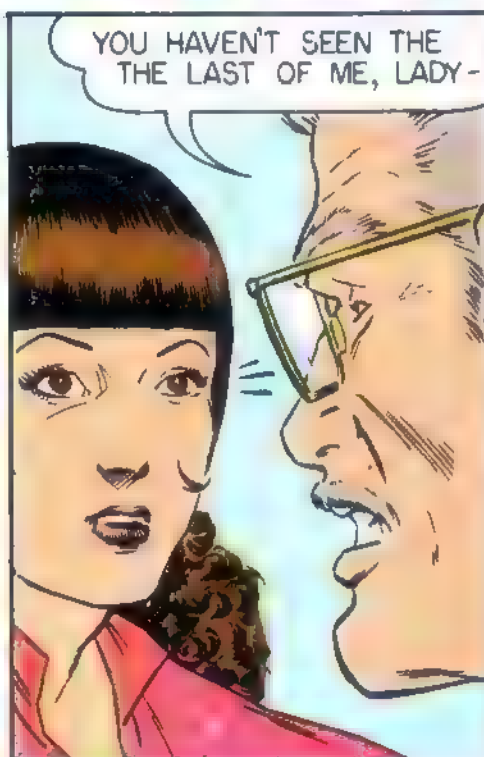
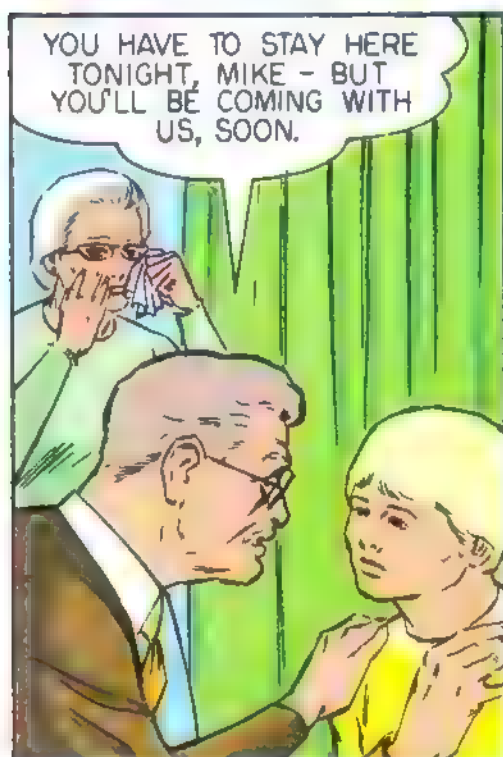




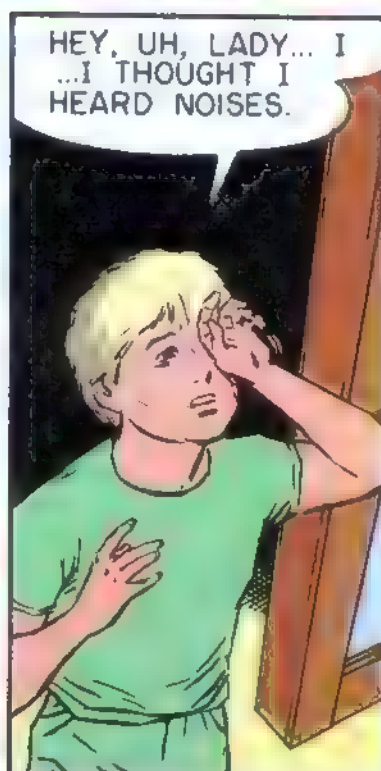
















Please send your letters to:  
**SWAK**  
Eclipse Comics  
P. O. Box 199  
Guerneville, California 95446

Dear Max,

I'm enjoying *Ms. Tree* tremendously—it is the **only** 4-colour comic I buy! (That shows you how far out of the mainstream I am!) Perhaps it is significant that I enjoy it even though I am absolutely not a mystery reader at all. Partly, it must be the sheer relief of seeing comics used for something—anything!—other than superheroes. But that alone is not enough praise for the very mature handling of the strip on the part of both yourself and Terry Beatty. Terry's (your?) layouts lack the pointless pyrotechnics of most comics, and are by far more reminiscent of the even pacing and understated drama of some of the classic newspaper strips, such as *Terry and the Pirates*, or (of course) *Dick Tracy*.

I also like the fact that the stories seem to take place in the real world—there are endless ways to use a detective concept, I'm sure, but to me the fact that *Ms. Tree* is contemporary in her persona and attitudes, and the crimes that she faces are real, possible, modern crimes, makes it worth reading. If you continue to broaden our look at her world and her personality, you will undoubtedly have a real classic on your hands. So, Bravo! And I hope it succeeds, so that us non-hero comics types can regain at least a small portion of the market. In the so-called alternative comics, your work is in fact one of the very few genuine alternatives. Long may you prosper!

ARN SABA, Toronto, CANADA

These kind (and, we're immodest enough to say, accurate) words would be appreciated coming from any source—but from this source's mouth (actually, horse's mouth) these words carry particular weight. For those of you ignorant in the ways of the few *real* comics being published today, allow us to point out that Arn Saba is the creator/artist/writer of *Neil the Horse*, whose adventures are being published bi-monthly by Aardvark-Vanaheim, the Cerebus folks. *Neil the Horse* is a beautifully drawn, charmingly written throwback to the days when comics were for kids of all ages.

I'm glad Arn has raised the question of whose layouts Terry is following, because it lets me get into, briefly, the way *Ms. Tree* is put together. I write a full script, with each panel broken down verbally; from this, Terry does rough lay-outs, which we then go over together, making changes. In the past, Terry has done all the penciling, inking and lettering; but beginning with the next issue, Gary Kato joins the *Ms. Tree* staff as Terry's assistant (Gary pencilled the "Mike Mist" in this issue, working from Beatty roughs). Gary, a first-rate cartoonist whose work has appeared most recently in various Charlton titles, will be sort of an "in-betweener," to borrow an animation term. Terry will do rough pencils, which Gary will tighten; Terry will then finish the pencils—including all the faces, which Gary will be leaving more or less blank—and Terry will then do all the inking himself. Gary will also be doing the lettering. We're pleased to have Gary Kato aboard.

Getting back to Arn's original point about the layouts—since Terry and I live in the same small town in Iowa (poor Gary Kato suffers the miserable fate of living in Hawaii) we collaborate on the *Ms. Tree* strip in a way few modern comic book (or even strip) features entail. My suggestions have so much impact on the art—and Terry's suggestions have so much impact on the writing—that we decided early on to take an old-fashioned, syndicated-strip style ambiguous byline, not

breaking the credits down into writer/artist, a la the post-Stan Lee comic-book convention. (That last is not the sort of comic-book convention one attends, incidentally). Perhaps our byline—as much as our traditional approach to layout and storytelling—was our way of saying what Arn picked up on: that we are consciously approaching *Ms. Tree* from a comic-strip sensibility as opposed to comic book.

Dear Max and Terry,

I sure got a kick out of seeing my letter in your SWAK column—tho' it wasn't written with print in mind!

My favorite thing in issue #2 of *Ms. Tree* is that fight in the elevator—without a single POW! or WHAP! or THUD!, your fight has more gritty physicality than the over-choreographed encounters of the super-hero 'zines!

In other words, dynamite!

Also a note on "The Scythe" for editor Cat Yronwode: where, now did "Cupid" Jones get her black bangs and heart wardrobe? Huh, Cat, huh?

Keep up the good work!

BARB RAUSCH, W. Hollywood, CA

"Scythe" editor cat replies: "Cupid" Jones was entirely author Dean Mullaney's idea, except for—you guessed it—the hearts on her dress. Years of *Katy Keene* reading may have warped my mind, but somehow the idea of her wearing heart-spangled clothes came to me the moment I heard her name. Maybe a "Cupid" Jones Paper Doll page is next...if readers demand it.

Max Collins again: Just another reminder that Barb Rausch is one of the major movers behind the current *Katy Keene* revival; she's also a terrific artist, and has assisted on the aforementioned *Neil the Horse* comic book, significantly on some nifty paper-doll pages. A paper doll page in *Ms. Tree*, cat? That's so wrong an idea I love it....

Dear Max:

I came into *Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures* 'cold,' having no previous experience of the character bar a few (mainly negative) reviews in UK 'zines concerning the magazine version. I didn't expect to enjoy it, since I'm a super-hero fan of about twenty years' standing. But I'm won over. The unusually stylized and deceptively placid-looking artwork is intriguing to anybody sated on flashy pyrotechnics, and I was drawn in and held from page two's eerie nightmare sequence (in *Ms. Tree* #1). Not to slight the storyline, either—the unavoidable task of filling in new readers, like me, on the character's background was tackled skillfully, painlessly (at least on the reader's part—I daresay you had to agonize over it a bit...), and with minimum risk of boring the hide off those already familiar with her history. There's a very understated, naturalistic tone to the dialogue that's a breath of fresh air after the stilted phrases and top-heavy, ponderous thought balloons predominant in many funny-books, and the character of *Ms. Tree* herself is likeable, accessible, and competent, I'm relieved to note—neither a shallow, helpless frill nor a hairy-chested Amazon. Nice balance...

What more can I say? It's nice to see an 'alternative' publisher produce a title that is an actual alternative to mainstream comics, rather than just the mixture as before, with added sex, violence and profanity. Well done; and I wish you luck, though, I'm confident, you won't be needing it.

HOWARD STANGROOM, Cleveland, ENGLAND



We'll take your luck, as well as your kind, thoughtful words, Howard—we're bucking the tide with this title, as most of our readers know ... though the competition, both alternative and "major" companies alike, are filling the stands with non-costumed female characters, and detective stories, which means we must be doing something right. (By the way, the only *Ms. Tree* reviews we've seen in British 'zines have been favorable ones; how 'bout sending us those pans, Howard? We're masochists.) Still, Terry and I find it ironic that what we're doing is considered an alternative to "mainstream" comics; *Ms. Tree* is—or should be—mainstream. We're doing straightforward genre pieces, with what we hope is a fresh, modern touch; but avante garde we're not. That *Ms. Tree* is, in the current marketplace, an alternative to the "mainstream" is a sad commentary on how narrow today's mainstream is.



Dear Max and Terry,

Congratulations—*Ms. Tree* is a wonderful book, all ways around. The artwork is fresh and stylish and yet simple and clearly defined—while the storytelling is just damn good storytelling—free of fluff and manipulative writing techniques that are usually thrown into a story, in the absence of a story.

I am very impressed with this book and had to write you to let you know of my feelings. I'm early awaiting the next issue. Also, the "Mike Mist" 2-pager was good. Keep up the good work.

GARY LOVISI, Brooklyn, NY

We're glad you enjoy the book, Gary, but I have to admit that I use "manipulative writing techniques" all the time—all suspense writers do. The good ones do so in such a way that the reader either doesn't pick up on the manipulation, being so fully drawn into the story; or does pick up on the manipulation, but finds it skillful and amusing and, so, doesn't mind being manipulated. That's how I feel about Hitchcock, for example; even in his masterpiece, "Vertigo," I'm aware I'm being manipulated—and, as Maxwell Smart would say, loving it.

Also, I should mention—since Gary brought it up—that "Mike Mist" is going back to a one-page format, at least for a while (Terry will be doing "Mist" unassisted); this has to do with time and space limitations—as you may have noticed, beginning this issue we're giving you not 16 pages of "Ms. Tree," but 18—and monthly. (Readers—would you be willing to lose a page of "Ms. Tree" to return "Mike Mist" to its 2-page format?)

Dear Max and Terry,

I am in love with *Ms. Tree*'s.

I am just fascinated with *Ms. Tree*.

I have issues 1 and 2. I am so interested in Mr. Muerta. It's really getting exciting.

I love this book and my mom likes it too.

I hope you continue the great work.

VICTORIA LAVALLE, age 10, Niles, ILLINOIS

Victoria, we love your letter and especially the drawing of Ms. Tree on the envelope. Most of our readers are older than you (though some of our critics appear to be less mature) and we are glad you're reading the book with your mom's approval and guidance.

Dear Thrilling Adventurers,

Not all of *Ms. Tree*'s fans want to send in marriage proposals, but after reading *Ms. Tree* #2, I had to break my silence and tell you how much I like the lady. Max Collins has a real flair for the plot and character subtleties needed in a good mystery, and Terry Beatty's art is beautiful. I've never seen anything quite like it before. He obviously has a great deal of affection for *Ms. Tree* and all the people in her complex life, and in an industry where few artists ink their own work, it's great to see someone who wears both hats very, very well.

Frank Miller's pinup was a stunner, and I can't wait for his Nancy Drew. (Pinup, my foot! Would anyone in their right mind rip up this comic?) The minute *Mist-ery* was okay, but as for the first issue's, I'd hoped a six-foot-nine editor named Jim Shorter (or something) would off Harry Roth. Oh, well...

"The Scythe" is not a very polished feature yet, but it shows real promise. If you'll just get rid of those idiotic streamers, I just might send in a marriage proposal after all. (To Roger, that is.)

"*Ms. Tree*" is a great concept, not simply because it's a mystery, but because it's part of a growing number of exceptional comics (or comic features) whose stars are non-powered heroes. Eclipse's own "Masked Man" comes to mind, as well as Marvel's "Kazar" and "Shanna," and First's "Jon Sable," when I think of heroes/heroines who have no powers, but retain the altruism and humanity of the best of their super-powered counterparts.

Thank you for some of the finest entertainment eighty cents (love them discount outlets!) can buy.

AMY SACKS, Deal Park, NJ

Terry and I just love hearing from female readers—since it's so very presumptuous of us to be telling stories from a woman's point-of-view, we're delighted when our efforts pass muster with the girls (just kidding, cat—I meant to say, "women"). Your thoughtful comments are appreciated, Amy. When you addressed your letter to "thrilling adventurers," however, you unwittingly paved the way for the next paragraph...

As you've noticed by now, we are no longer *Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures* (a.k.a., the Comic Book That Sounds Like a Law Firm) but plain ol' *Ms. Tree*. As indicated in various commentary spread throughout this SWAK!, the format of the book has changed slightly—we've gone monthly; and there'll be two pages more of "Ms. Tree," one page less of "Mike Mist." (Frank Miller's pinup and Mullaney/Goodson's "The Scythe" will continue, as before—we're still a balanced detective comic book, with lots o' features.)

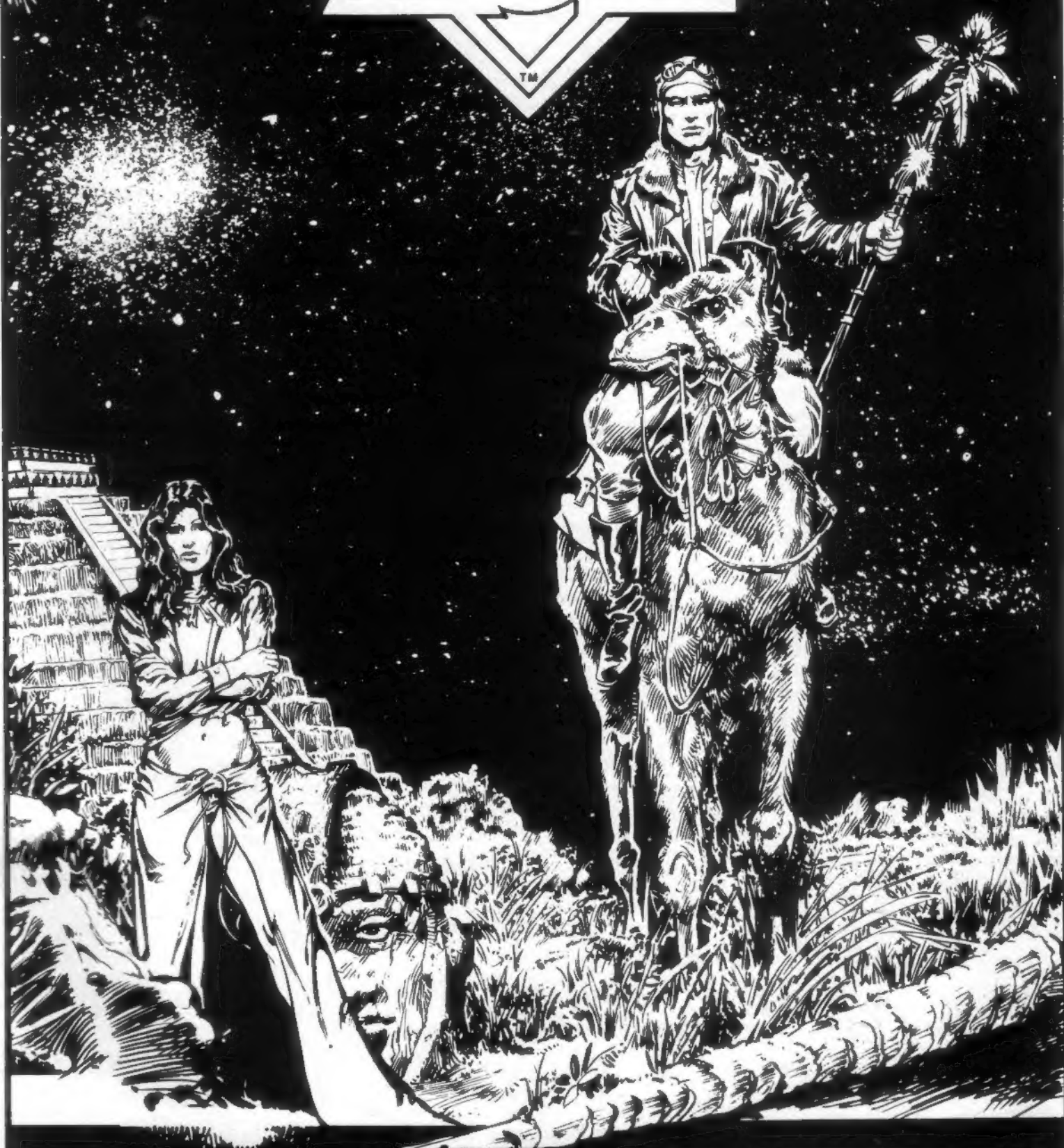
A more major change than any of the others, perhaps, is the improved paper we're being printed on—Baxter, as in the last name of Hazel the Maid's boss. Believe it or not, as they say in the comics, Terry Beatty and I were against this move and had to be coaxed, cajoled, flattered and threatened before giving in. We wanted to stay on good old-fashioned pulp paper; we wanted to keep the price at \$1. But the appeal of Baxter books to many of our readers—and the improved printing quality (we've never seen a copy of issue #1 that didn't have a smudged splash page)—was too seductive to resist. We are, however, conducting this as an experiment of sorts—if reader reaction to the better paper (and higher price) is negative, we will retreat with dignity to *Ms. Tree's* pulp roots.

M.A.C.



Making the past safe from the future

# AZTEC X-CLIE



by Doug Moench, Michael Hernandez & Nestor Redondo  
Coming soon from Eclipse.



# JUST IMAGINE

JIM STARLIN

NEAL ADAMS

FRANK CIROCCO

& DAVE SIM



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**ALL  
IN ONE  
ISSUE !!**



**FIRST ISSUE  
ON SALE IN MARCH  
from ECLIPSE**



WONDER  
WOMAN, DID  
YOU SCAN  
THIS  
COMIC?

NO, SILLY,  
THIS IS A  
KCBURBS  
SCAN, FOR  
DCP!!

WILLIE  
PETERS

